

# LEADING

*Like Jesus*



40

**LEADERSHIP  
LESSONS**

*From the Upside-Down Kingdom*

**FLOYD McCLUNG**



# **LEADING** *like Jesus*

Floyd McClung

follow publications

*Leading Like Jesus*

Copyright © 2015 by Floyd McClung. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-692-37880-9

Unless otherwise marked, Scriptures are taken from the *Holy Bible, New King James Version*.® Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (The Message) are taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

## *With love to Sally,*

Forty-seven years and it gets sweeter  
as the days and years go by.

I love what Winnie the Pooh said, remember?

*"If you live to be a hundred, I want to live to be a  
hundred minus one day so I never have to live  
without you."*

## *To Kezia & Luke,*

You make me laugh, you make me proud,  
you make me hope...you make me real.

*"‘Real isn't how you are made,’ said the Skin Horse.  
‘It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves  
you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but  
REALLY loves you, then you become Real.’"*

*—The Velveteen Rabbit*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

***Floyd McClung*** has spoken on more than 100 university campuses and has traveled to 193 countries. He is the author of 14 books, including best-selling books, *The Father Heart of God*, *Living on the Devil's Doorstep*, and *You See Bones - I See an Army*.

He graduated from Vanguard University in 1967 with a bachelor of arts in New Testament studies. Floyd and his wife, Sally, were married two days after his graduation, on June 2, 1967.

In 1993, the McClungs founded All Nations, a family of churches that is active in training leaders, making disciples, and catalyzing church planting movements all over the world. Floyd's passion is mentoring and discipling emerging leaders. The McClungs live in Cape Town, South Africa.

LEARN MORE, FOLLOW, OR WRITE TO FLOYD AT:

BLOG - [floydandsally.com](http://floydandsally.com)

TWITTER - [@floydmcclung](https://twitter.com/floydmcclung)

EMAIL - [floyds.assistant@all-nations.co.za](mailto:floyds.assistant@all-nations.co.za)

TO LEARN ABOUT ALL NATIONS, VISIT THEIR WEBSITE AT:

[capetown.allnationsworldwide.org](http://capetown.allnationsworldwide.org)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## ***Thank you...***

Thank you to Michelle Booth for the proof editing and marketing.

A huge thank you to Anj Riffel for her editing and writing partnership. Thank you for your patience and professionalism, Anj. And your friendship.

Thank you Brandon, Julianna, Noah, Misha, Mandi, Neil, Jonathan, and Sophia for helping brainstorm the title of the book.

A big, big thank you to Joolz for serving Sally and me. Joolz is a gem!

A group hug to our All Nations family in Cape Town. Thank you for seeing us through the cancer journey.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Foreword: \*Is Jesus Practical?\* by Carl Medearis](#)

[Introduction: \*Why Jesus?\* by Floyd McClung](#)

[Lesson 1 : \*A Leader's Identity\*](#)

[Lesson 2 : \*Called to Lead\*](#)

[Lesson 3 : \*Leaders Call Followers\*](#)

[Lesson 4 : \*A Leader's Friends\*](#)

[Lesson 5 : \*Leaders Choose Their Own Teams\*](#)

[Lesson 6 : \*Buy-In\*](#)

[Lesson 7 : \*Leading with Discernment\*](#)

[Lesson 8 : \*Complicity Versus Confrontation\*](#)

[Lesson 9 : \*The Principle of the Relaxed Grasp\*](#)

[Lesson 10 : \*Prophetic Voice\*](#)

[Lesson 11 : \*Preferential Treatment\*](#)

[Lesson 12 : \*Connecting and Chemistry\*](#)

[Lesson 13 : \*Leading Unlikelies\*](#)

[Lesson 14 : \*Imperative People\*](#)

[Lesson 15 : \*Leadership Tests\*](#)

[Lesson 16 : \*Don't Do Miracles by Yourself\*](#)

[Lesson 17 : \*When People Try to Make You King\*](#)

[Lesson 18 : \*Finding Meaning in Times of Crisis\*](#)

[Lesson 19 : \*Leadership Selection\*](#)

[Lesson 20 : \*The Gift of Rejection\*](#)

[Lesson 21 : \*Leadership Discipline\*](#)

[Lesson 22 : \*Manage What You Release\*](#)

[Lesson 23 : \*Leaders Speak with Authority\*](#)

[Lesson 24 : \*Two Anointings\*](#)

[Lesson 25 : \*Unresolvable Conflicts\*](#)

[Lesson 26 : \*The Power of a Rebuke\*](#)

[Lesson 27 : \*Power Distance\*](#)

[Lesson 28 : \*Spiritual Thievery\*](#)

[Lesson 29 : \*Those Who Grieve Well, Grow Well\*](#)

[Lesson 30 : \*Cultivate Loyalty, Confront Disloyalty\*](#)

[Lesson 31 : \*Becoming a Leader\*](#)

[Lesson 32 : \*Jesus Now\*](#)

[Lesson 33 : \*Values-Based Leadership\*](#)

[Lesson 34 : \*Leading for Change\*](#)

[Lesson 35 : \*Alignment\*](#)

[Lesson 36 : \*Betrayal, Denial, Abandonment\*](#)

[Lesson 37 : \*The Price of Leadership\*](#)

[Lesson 38 : \*Succession\*](#)

[Lesson 39 : \*Jesus-Style Church\*](#)

[Lesson 40 : \*Legacy\*](#)

[Notes](#)



## FOREWORD

# *Is Jesus Practical?*

---

By Carl Medearis

***Last week,*** I spoke to a group of Christian businessmen in Denver, Colorado. It's a weekly Bible study that meets at a nice country club—about 70 great, godly, successful men. I shared “How I Read the Bible,” suggesting that we should consider reading the Old Testament through the eyes of the New Testament, and the entire Bible through the lens of Jesus. All was good. Plenty of smiles and nodding gray-haired heads.

I then proposed that we try to make the teaching practical. More heads bobbed in agreement. “Practical. Yes. Very wise,” they encouraged.

It was a week full of Middle East news. Bad news, of course. War and terrorism were the talk of the town. So I thought I'd share some of Jesus' thoughts on enemies, like how He encouraged us to “turn the other cheek” and His well-known invitation to “love your enemies.” I highlighted His seemingly easier commands to “pray for your enemies” and “bless your enemies,” then closed with “loan to your enemies without expecting return.” (Which, I pointed out, is then not really a loan, but a gift.)

Through the Apostle Paul, Jesus also said, “do not repay vengeance” and “overcome evil with good.” Pretty straightforward, I thought. I didn't suggest that doing any of this was easy, but pointed out, it's not contested that Jesus said these things.

Next, I challenged them to consider these teachings in the context of the day's current events: evil men killing Christians in Iraq and Syria, bombs fired on civilians by both

Israelis and Palestinians. I suggested that Americans who claim the way of Jesus as their guide should engage in these teachings at a very rudimentary level. The questions were immediate. With arms folded and slight smirks, the men retorted, “Yeah, but you’re not suggesting we just go around loving Al Qaeda are you?” Other remarks of a similar tone ensued.

When I was leaving, after much discussion (some of it heated), the man responsible for the Bible study said, “Carl, brother. Honestly, I think you went a little too far today.”

“Fair enough,” I replied. “On which thing?”

His answer stunned me. “How well is that ‘loving your enemy’ thing really working? Let’s be honest. The cross saved sinners, but doesn’t seem to work for this stuff you’re talking about.”

There you have it. Honestly, I’ve been there—thinking that one teaching of Jesus is practical and works in the real world, but another really doesn’t. A common line of thinking goes something like this: “Sure, Jesus is my Savior and friend and even King and Lord—I get that, and love that. But does He have pragmatic daily advice for how I engage the world I actually live in? I’m not always sure!”

That’s where this book comes in. And that’s where Floyd comes in. The book comes from the man. He tries as hard as anyone I’ve ever known to *actually* follow Jesus. Not in some spiritualized, mystical sense of a guru meditating on the mountainside, but in a day-to-day, this affects my real life, sort of way. He follows Jesus. You see Jesus. And then behind you see Floyd. Following. Doing and speaking, listening and working. Serving like Jesus.

*Leading Like Jesus* may be the most on-the-ground, connected-to-reality book on this topic I’ve ever read. I love it. I can’t wait to tell everyone about it. It comes from years of experience, from a heart yielded to and molded by The Leader Himself—Jesus of Nazareth.

This book has the ability to change the way you live and interact with the world around you. It will give you brand new thoughts on how you lead others, and how you allow Jesus to lead you. It helps answer the question: Is Jesus practical?

Take it seriously. Read it thoughtfully. And do what it says.

[carlmedearis.com](http://carlmedearis.com)

# INTRODUCTION

## ***Why Jesus?***

---

By Floyd McClung

***Jesus is arguably*** the most profound teacher of wisdom to have walked the earth. Yet, at the same time, He is also known as the humble, approachable friend of ordinary people.

I have followed Jesus since I was nine years old. And I am still as fascinated by Him today, having followed His lead for more than 60 years.

I am deeply dissatisfied with Christian religion, which is often more man-centered than God-centered. However, I continue to be attracted to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ.

I am captivated as I read of His encounters with normal people: the skeptical student warily watching Jesus from a distance; His own bewildered mother at the wedding feast; the religion professor who seeks Jesus at night; the loose woman of Samaria at the well; the men and women who choose to follow Him at great cost to their own lives. People just like you and me.

His leadership of everyday people is unparalleled. He began a movement like no other. A movement that is still going strong 2,000 years later. What can we learn from this? Why should we follow Jesus' leadership style? Is it still relevant today?

As Timothy Keller points out in *Encounters With Jesus*, Jesus not only models and explains the principles and practices of effective leadership, He addresses the big, universal "meaning of life" questions: What is the world for?

What's wrong with it? How can we be part of making it right?

1

I enjoy learning how Jesus led people, how He explained Himself to people, and how He interacted with people as He helped them work through life's big questions.

Jesus not only answers these central questions, He models and teaches how to address them practically. That is what leadership is about: the courage to act, to make a difference.

The best way to learn to be a great leader is to study and emulate the lives of great leaders. I have made that a practice for many years. This book is about Jesus—not the misrepresented Jesus, claimed exclusively by some Christians as belonging only to them—but Jesus the inclusive leader, a leader for everyone.

Jesus did not approach leadership as a position of power, but as acts of service. He inspired people to volunteer their time and energy for something they believe in, and counted those who did so as leaders in His “upside-down” Kingdom. Jesus described leadership for everyone in these words:

Do you want to stand out? Then step down. Be a servant. If you puff yourself up, you'll get the wind knocked out of you. But if you're content to simply be yourself, your life will count for plenty. (Matt. 23:11-12, The Message)

Jesus taught that if you serve others, you influence them, and if they accept your influence, you lead them. From the example of Jesus the Leader, we learn that if you lead a person by being a servant, you have moral authority in a person's life.

I believe leadership is a give-and-take process between those who choose to lead and those who choose to follow. Some want to argue whether leaders are born or made. My purpose here is not to address that issue. Regardless of whether you were born or made to lead, if you value serving

people and, as a result, influence them to accomplish certain purposes in a noble manner, you are a leader.

Leadership is not a position of power, but a collection of practices and principles that flow out of who a person is. In their hearts, people don't follow positions—they follow people. Leadership is a relational process of influencing others toward a common purpose.

In their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, Barry Posner and James Kouzes define leadership as the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.<sup>2</sup>

To better understand the style of leadership I'm describing, it helps to view everyone who works with you as a volunteer. Assume people are with you because they want to be, not because they have to be. Remember, in this paradigm of leadership, people won't stay with you if they don't believe in you—they're not captives.

It is one thing to hire people to do a job, but it's another thing altogether to mobilize an army of volunteers to sacrifice for a cause they believe in.

When we read the sayings of Jesus, and we study His life as a leader, we learn that a leader doesn't just organize others to do something. He *motivates* them to want to do something. Jesus went for the heart. There is a massive difference between inspiring faith and giving orders, between fostering commitment and commanding obedience.

I believe leaders are born *and* made. Some leaders have natural abilities to lead. But that doesn't make them good leaders. They must do something with what they are given, and that means using their abilities to serve others with integrity and humility. By emphasizing these character qualities, Jesus leveled the playing field for all who choose to lead, whether born or made.

Jesus taught by example that leadership is not about position. It is having the courage to take responsibility for

your own life, then choosing to serve others as well. There are skills needed to do this well, which leads us to the purpose of this book.

This book unpacks the leadership principles and practices of Jesus, highlighting how He empowers ordinary people to do extraordinary things. We will discover the pathway to true greatness, found in the person and teachings of Jesus.

Jesus taught that anyone could be a great leader and do extraordinary things if they listened and obeyed the simple truths He shared. He came to liberate people by calling them to be who they were created to be.

This book is a field manual for leaders who want to excel by studying the life and teachings of Jesus. Obviously, there are levels of leadership influence. Some people are hidden leaders, while others have visible roles of leadership.

The practices and principles of Jesus apply to all forms of leadership, from informal leadership in the home to the leadership of CEOs and MDs in the workplace. They apply to leaders in government, education, and entertainment. No one and no vocation in life is outside the scope of Jesus' example. Jesus cares about all of life and therefore, His teachings apply to all of life.

The leadership principles and practices of Jesus presented in this book are drawn from the Gospel of John. I chose John's Gospel because John lived 30 years longer than any of the other disciples of Jesus. He had more time to consider and apply the things Jesus taught. John's account tells of Jesus' personal encounters with ordinary people from all walks of life.

John believed that Jesus lives on in the lives of His followers through the abiding presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This is the key to learning to lead like Jesus.

The leadership lessons of Jesus are described in very short chapters. They are written for busy people, so each chapter gets right to the point, focusing on a lesson drawn from John's Gospel.

The book is written in a simple outline form. You can read a chapter in a few minutes, then think about it all day. You can also use the book as a leadership training manual to equip other leaders. Perhaps the book will inspire you to change certain things you think or do as a leader.

But there is one thing we cannot change by ourselves, no matter how much good we do for others. Jesus taught that we could be changed forever—not by our good efforts as leaders, but instead by what He has done for us.

As Keller said, “Jesus accomplishes a salvation in our place that we could never have achieved ourselves. Seeing this can move you from an acquaintance with Jesus as a teacher and historical figure to a life-changing encounter with Him as redeemer and savior.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus is the greatest hero of history. He is the symbol and reality of life-changing sacrifice. He is the smiling, laughing friend of children, and the serious consultant of leaders in every religion. We should never allow Jesus to be stolen and claimed by possessive Christians as only “their” savior. Jesus is accessible to all people of all faiths—if they come to Him on His terms.

Jesus is seemingly a man of many contradictions:

- Jesus is approachable to people of all levels of life, yet inspires awe and reverence.
- Jesus is sensitive to how others feel, yet totally unmoved and unimpressed by those who seek to brand and market Him.
- Jesus is humble and lowly, yet wholly removed and separated from human evil.
- Jesus’ teachings have changed the lives of millions, yet people seldom understand what His parables really meant.
- Jesus encourages the questions of skeptics, but has no time for religious rules and arguments.



- Jesus treats everyone with equal value and respect, but gives special favor to the abused and used.
- Jesus regularly acted with courage, yet prayed for the Father to “take the cup” of suffering on the cross away.
- Jesus was the personification of calm and control, yet purposely demonstrated great anger to the unjust. He saved anger for when it counted most.
- Jesus led from the front, yet sought to lead from behind and beside as well.
- Jesus was principled, yet was the supreme pragmatist.
- Jesus saw the dark side of people, but refused to see only that, especially amongst the religious and political leaders who opposed Him.
- Jesus knew the difference between active rebellion and thoughtless unpredictability. He confronted the rebellious but encouraged the unpredictable.
- Jesus was the ultimate servant, yet was, and remains, Jesus the Leader.

It is my hope that you enjoy, like I have these many years, discovering Jesus as both a friend and leader.

***Floyd McClung***

All Nations | Cape Town, July, 2014



## LESSON 1

# ***A Leader's Identity***

---

*Now this is the testimony of John [the Baptist]...He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."*

– John 1:19–20

*Jesus answered...“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.*

– John 5:19

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Identity*** is the most important dimension in the spiritual formation of a leader.

Those who have a correct understanding of their identity attract people to follow them for the right reasons. They are secure in who God has made them and are not striving to be someone “important.” People buy into who we are before they buy into our vision or cause. When we are secure in our identity, others will recognize our security and be at ease with us.

We don’t make disciples or build a team by exhorting people or manipulating them. We draw them into our vision through our genuine love for people. Authentic love for others is the by-product of a secure identity.

In the Gospels, we see this lack of striving in both Jesus and John the Baptist. There was no manipulation to gain favor with people. They both exhibited great patience, living obscure lives until it was time to step into the leadership roles the Father had appointed for them. Conversely, driven

leaders do not wait patiently for God's timing, but strive and perform to be noticed.

Jesus deferred to the Father. John the Baptist deferred to Jesus. John knew who he was and who he was not. Like Jesus, he did not have an inflated ego, though the attention of multitudes was on him. John knew he was not the one people were longing for:

"I am not the Christ...I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" (John 1:20-23)

We see the fruit of John the Baptist's humility and inner security displayed in his willingness to be in the background when Jesus came on the scene. There was no hinting for attention—no name-dropping or pouting because someone else was now the center of attention. He didn't ask for a leadership role on Jesus' team. He didn't ask to teach, or be recognized for his unique contribution in any way.

Because he was at peace with himself, John the Baptist easily pointed people to Jesus. John fearlessly exercised his calling, yet quickly relinquished his leadership role when the time came. (John 1:37) He didn't hold on to his disciples, but encouraged them to follow Jesus. Few leaders would do this in today's competitive church culture.

The examples that Jesus and John lived out for us can only be achieved through a secure identity. They did not seek their own glory.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***Growing up,*** throughout high school, university, and in my younger years as a leader, I was painfully insecure. I was more self-conscious than God-conscious. I was continually concerned about how people related to me. I was worried about how I fit in, why I wasn't asked to do something, and vigilant about what was going on around me.

I needed healing in my identity. Though I was tall and stood out in a crowd, on the inside, I felt inferior to others. I was a successful student athlete and a popular student government leader, but still, I was painfully insecure.

Secure identity is crucial in the spiritual formation of a leader. By “identity,” I mean a correct understanding of who we are as accepted, forgiven, and loved sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

A secure identity results from an accurate comprehension of who God has created us to be. It puts us at peace with His choices for us, including our culture, gender, ancestry, life experiences, physical attributes, and recognition or lack of recognition.

Over a period of years, through great mentoring and God’s work of grace in my heart, I have grown confident in my identity as a son with a Father in heaven who delights in me. The striving for acceptance, attention, and to be liked has settled to a place of rest in my soul.

I discovered that the degree of my security in whom God made me to be, in His love for me, is directly related to my effectiveness as a servant-leader.

God used a spiritual father from New Zealand, Ken Wright, to impart godly security to my life. Ken affirmed me, encouraged me, and spoke healing into my heart through his fatherly mentoring and affirmation. It was vital for me to have an older man of God in my life who loved, encouraged, and believed in me. Every leader needs a spiritual father or mother like this.

When I would go to Ken, deeply perturbed about some “huge” issue in life, he would chuckle, smile a big warm smile, and then speak a word of wisdom at the right time. His secure style of leadership and his great trust in God modeled for me what a secure identity was like.

To help understand the qualities of a leader with a secure identity, consider the characteristics of a leader who has an insecure identity:

- Self-focused
- Critical of others
- Controlling
- Driven
- Performance-oriented
- Demanding
- Fears people's opinions
- Jealous of other leaders
- Easily offended
- Exaggerated sense of self-importance
- Insensitive
- Concerned about recognition

If you identify with any of these characteristics, do not be discouraged. Just as God was faithful to heal me of insecurity, He can do the same for any willing heart.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***God's greatest concern*** for us is our character, and the most important character quality for a leader is a secure identity. It is not anything we can achieve for ourselves. Rather, we embark on the pathway to a secure identity by receiving a "spirit of revelation, that the eyes of our hearts will be opened to see the riches of Christ Jesus in us..." (Eph. 1:17-19) Daily ask God, as your loving Father, to reveal His love for you. Invite Jesus each day to speak deep into your spirit that you are loved by the Father, and then go and serve others from the overflow of that love.



## LESSON 2

# ***Called to Lead***

---

*The next day Jesus determined to go to Galilee. When He got there, He found Philip and said, "Come, follow me..."*

– John 1:43

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Many people think*** being “called” by God only applies to pastors, missionaries, or those employed by professional Christian ministries. But this view is damaging to the lives of “ordinary” people, and it is detrimental to the purposes of God.

True, some people are called to be missionaries and others are called to serve as pastors. These are special callings, and we honor those who have said yes to the Lord to serve Him in these ways.

But as followers of Jesus, God has a call on each of our lives—not only our vocations, but also our homes, hobbies, relationships, etc. God calls people in all walks of life to live integrated lives. That is, to serve Him 24/7, wherever He has placed us.

There is a common DNA for everyone who says yes to the call of God, whether in the marketplace, the home, or the ministry.

### **OUR COMMON CALLING**

- **WORSHIP** – We are called to live a life of spiritual devotion to Jesus through prayer and study of God’s Word.

- MISSION – We are called to make disciples who make disciples among those who do not know Jesus.
- COMMUNITY – We are called to be part of a spiritual family that loves and cares for one another.

The temptation in modeling leadership on the life of Jesus, as I am doing in this book, is to subtly give unintentional credence to the notion that only a few are called to be “spiritual” leaders. That line of thinking goes like this: Jesus, the Son of God, is our leader. He calls a few others (like the twelve apostles) to help Him by serving as spiritual leaders. Only these few have the privilege of working “full-time” for the Lord. The rest of the church serves those who are full-time by praying for them and supporting them financially.

But the opposite is true. Jesus came to upend the two-tier religious system where only a few are called to be priests, pastors, and missionaries, while the rest of us serve as onlookers to those who do the “real” ministry.

Jesus called fishermen and doctors and carpenters and accountants to follow Him, to become leaders of His church. This shows Jesus’ intent—all are called to a life of servant leadership, no matter their vocation or status in life.

Jesus encouraged ordinary people to use their best efforts in the face of challenging circumstances. He called Zacchaeus down from his hiding place, went home with him, and motivated him to be a full-time disciple, even while keeping his job as a tax collector.

What qualifies a leader? Leaders get things done. Leaders turn challenging situations into opportunities that make a difference in people’s lives. Leaders are those who have said yes to being fully devoted disciples of Jesus, and are called to serve Him in whatever vocation He places them in. Leaders are those who actively share their faith and build intentional discipling relationships with people who don’t know Christ.

Jesus invited ordinary men and women to follow Him, including army officers, government officials, and housewives. He validated their role in His Kingdom by calling them to be disciples, then trained them how to live and think His way within their vocation. Jesus believed there is leadership potential in everyone and He came to liberate it.

In a sense, this book is a field manual for people who want to learn Jesus' style of leadership, but don't want to become "religious." This means accepting a call to learn skills and principles that enable you to mobilize others to action—whether that action is on the job, in the home, or in school.

Jesus modeled a style of leadership that works from the inside out—not born of religious duty, but personal desire. There is a difference between merely *saying* yes to Jesus and actually *wanting* to say yes. Rather than mobilizing people to do things for God, this style of leadership seeks to mobilize people who *want* to do great things for God.

## LESSON LEARNED

***Leadership*** is the result of serving other people; if you serve people, you lead them. If you lead people to Jesus, you are a spiritual leader. I estimate that 90 percent of disciple making in the world is done by people in the marketplace—not missionaries and pastors. The marketplace includes schools, business, government, and entertainment.

Through my travels, I have encountered incredible government and business leaders in many nations that are "full-time" spiritual leaders. Bill Dykes is one leader that made a deep impact on me years ago. He sold insurance for a large company. Although he led the company in sales for many years, success in business was not his greatest priority.

"When people come to my office," Bill would say, "I want them to meet the most important person in my life...Jesus



Christ.”

When Jesus said to Philip, “Follow me,” He was calling him to leadership in God’s Kingdom, not necessarily to leave his job. The Apostle Paul said yes to Jesus, but still made tents to earn an income. We become leaders when we become obedient followers of Jesus, not when we quit our jobs to study for the “ministry.”

If we fail to say yes to Jesus’ call on our lives, less than God’s best transpires. For example, if a gifted carpenter thinks he has to become a pastor to be a spiritual leader and quits his job, he is actually saying no to God’s call on his life. This can result in disappointment, trauma for his family, and financial disaster. But when that carpenter says yes to God’s call within his vocation and starts to “pastor” those on his work crew, he finds fresh meaning in what he does. Then he is not just earning a salary; he is saying yes to the call of God.

When a financial planner resists the pressure to go to seminary and “prepare for the ministry,” but instead begins to view his current work as full-time ministry, his life can make a great impact for God. I have a friend who worked in the financial services industry. He loved helping people build security for the future. Even more, he loved talking to them about a different kind of security—spiritual security through a relationship with God. He led several Bible studies each week in the workplace for men interested in finding “spiritual security” for themselves and their families.

No one can understand God’s unique calling on your life like you can. It is something you have to wrestle through to a place of peace in your individual walk with God. This doesn’t mean you can’t seek advice from mentors and godly friends, but it does mean you have to know in your heart what God has called you to do, and then do it as your service to Him.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Are you confident*** of God's call on your life? Are you leading where He has placed you? If not, surrender your life to the Lord, and ask Him to use you as a leader right where you are. It starts in your home. It carries over into your work. Studying the leadership principles of Jesus will help you live an intentional life, full-time for the Lord—right where you are and wherever He leads you. It may mean a change of location, but it doesn't have to mean a change of vocation.



## LESSON 3

# ***Leaders Call Followers***

---

*After Philip said yes to follow Jesus, he went and found his friend Nathanael and told him about Jesus. "I've found the One preached about by the prophets. It's Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth!" Nathanael said, "Nazareth? You've got to be kidding." Philip said, "Come, see for yourself."*  
- John 1:44-46 (The Message, paraphrase)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Jesus very deliberately*** called certain men and women to follow Him. And He taught them to invite others as well. Good leaders raise up other leaders. They take note of the people God brings across their path and prayerfully discern which individuals He is calling them to influence. Then they invest in those people's lives, just as Jesus selected certain men and women to invest in.

It is popular wisdom today to go for the best and the brightest. But that is contrary to the wisdom of Jesus. He raised up His own leaders. Jesus made disciples of ordinary people. He disciplined them to faith in Himself as the Son of God—He didn't wait for them to come to faith before discipling them. And as they grew in faith, He taught them to disciple others also. He met them as they were fishing and working and doing life, then took time to connect with them personally.

There is a place for recruiting people with the right skills for the right job, but we should not overlook the hidden diamonds in our midst. Many of the world's greatest entrepreneurs are university dropouts that started businesses in garages and basements. Like Jesus, we should

use discernment to call those God gives to us, not only those who seem like a good fit on paper.

When assembling His leadership team, Jesus personally invited them to follow Him. He reached out. He asked. He didn't just walk down the road and expect some kind of supernatural attraction to occur. He didn't expect potential disciples to pick up on a vibe or get an eerie feeling by being around Him. He didn't wait for them to initiate a conversation. He initiated. And when it was the right time, He asked them to join Him.

In *The Leadership Lessons of Jesus*, Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard say, "People want to be asked and feel needed. Even when they say no—and some will—they will feel good about themselves and about you, simply because you asked."<sup>1</sup>

There will be times when people will volunteer to help you. And that is an amazing encouragement. But most people won't know you want their help if you don't ask.

This is especially true where key people are concerned. If you discern that specific people can play a key role, don't be afraid to ask them to join you. Let them know you need them. Affirm them, share your vision, and then ask them to pray about being part of the endeavor with you.

Ask them personally. Jesus asked people personally to follow Him, and so should you. Notice in the Gospels, the disciples are mentioned by name. Their stories are told and their reactions are recorded. Jesus values them as individuals.

I don't advise asking people to join you on the journey through an impersonal email, text, or social media message—not even through a phone call. Unless it is absolutely impossible, the best way to extend your invitation is to meet with them personally. Sit with them over coffee or a meal. Take time to hear their story. Share your story and your vision. Then look them in the eye and ask them to join you.

Jesus didn't post fliers asking people to join His cause. He first invited people to be with Him, to follow Him. In spending time with them, He naturally drew them to His cause. Relationships are primary. The cause is secondary. Don't be afraid to say to people, "I want you with me. I need you." Show them that they are important to you.

Jesus never strayed from the vision the Father gave Him. He called people to follow Him, and then told them what was to come: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Likewise, when we call people to join us, the vision and values should be clear. We don't invite people into a vacuum. It is only fair to let them know what you are about upfront and what you expect of them if they agree to serve the existing mission.

When calling followers in this personal way, we focus on the few to reach the many. Jesus was not trying to impress crowds or make a name for Himself. He was training leaders to multiply His mission many times over. He needed trustworthy men and women who would lead the movement He began. He modeled discipling them personally so He could implant the DNA of personal discipleship on His movement. In *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman said, "His concern was not programs for the multitudes, but men who could reach the multitudes."<sup>2</sup>

Whatever your place of service—the church, marketplace, home, or school—use Jesus' example in the Gospels to guide you in obeying God's call to leadership. Study how Jesus called disciples and how He passed on His vision and mission. Then follow His example as you raise up others to do the same.

Jesus started His public ministry by calling people to be fishers of men, and He ended it on a fishing trip on the Sea of Galilee. He was true to His calling and focused on His mission, from the beginning to the end.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***One of the most*** important leadership lessons I have learned is how to invite others to join me. I learned this skill through experience, because I was asked personally by other leaders to follow them. My personal spiritual growth has been greatly impacted by the influence of godly men and women who have discipled me. Men like Loren Cunningham.

Loren invited me to join his fledgling movement, Youth With A Mission (YWAM), when I was 19 years old. He asked me to lead a team to the West Indies and then coached me on how to do the job well. His personal invitation deeply affirmed me, gave me vision for how God could use me, and gave me an opportunity to put my commitment to the Lord into action.

Bill Dykes also invited me to follow him. He modeled how to be a disciple-maker in the marketplace. Bill once told me, "I work full-time for the Lord making disciples, I just happen to sell insurance on the side." "On the side" doesn't quite capture the amazing success Bill enjoyed as the top-ranking salesman for his company many years in a row. Even as a wealthy man, Bill's first passion was Jesus, and discipling others was a close second. I was a firsthand beneficiary of his passion. Bill invited me to spend time with him, and his personal investment in my life was a huge boost to my spiritual growth.

Loren Cunningham and Bill Dykes didn't pull their leadership concepts out of a hat. They studied and modeled their leadership after Jesus' example.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Pray over*** whom you should ask to join you, and ask God to prepare their hearts for the invitation. Make a list of the men or women God has already provided as your potential disciples or key leaders.

Discipleship is relationship. *Intentional relationship*. Assess if you have focused enough time on them as individuals. Make a plan to cut back on activities that distract you from your main calling of discipling people to faith in Jesus and raising up men and women who can disciple others also. The best leaders are those who capture this DNA of personal discipleship through intentional relationship.



## LESSON 4

# ***A Leader's Friends***

---

*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have beheld His glory,  
as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

- John 1:14

*Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with  
Jesus.*

- John 12:2

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Effective leaders*** spend time with their followers.

Followers become friends. It is not accidental that the Gospel writers picture Jesus eating with His disciples. Personal association as a lifestyle was Jesus' primary way of training and equipping His disciples.

Jesus did not employ the highly organized procedures commonly considered necessary today in order to be trained for ministry. Jesus drew men and women close to Himself. He was His own training school and curriculum. Jesus' disciples were not distinguished by a particular doctrine, but by being with Jesus.

Jesus took His disciples with Him on trips, visits to people's homes, outreaches, and retreats. He ate and slept together with them. He traveled and sailed and fished with them. He was with them in cities, synagogues, deserts, gardens, funerals, and weddings.

Jesus was accessible to His disciples as the third person of the Trinity, God in flesh, but He was also with them in His humanity. He entered their ordinary, everyday world. He was



a carpenter hanging out with tax collectors and fishermen, a son caring for His mother. He was a brother, a friend.

Jesus taught His disciples in the rabbinical style of question and answer, not in the Greek style of abstract philosophy and theory. He was up close and personal—mentoring, walking a journey with them in life. Jesus told them stories (parables), listened to their questions, and heard their fears. He taught them by how He lived His life.

Some leaders become so enamored with themselves, so busy, so caught up in “ministry,” that they wind up being inaccessible to the very people they were called to minister. They are ministering in the name of Jesus, but they don’t minister like Jesus.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***One of my*** university professors was theologian Dr. Gordon Fee. Though Dr. Fee was a world-renowned scholar, he made time for me as a student. He took a personal interest in my life. He invited me to his home, attended my sports events to cheer me on, and visited me in the residence hall where I lived. When I fell in love with my wife-to-be, Sally, he was the first to take me aside and guide me in courtship and marriage preparation.

I was deeply impacted by the subject matter Dr. Fee taught us as students in the classroom (the incarnation, the Kingdom of God, God’s grace, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit), but what drove these life-changing messages home was how Dr. Fee imparted those truths through personal friendship. He was not merely transferring information. Dr. Fee made himself a friend to me. Amazing as it may seem, a university professor chose to hang out with me, a lowly student.

One of the great treasures of my life is the lifelong relationship I have enjoyed with Dr. Fee—author, conference speaker, scholar...and, my friend. He is one of several key

mentors who invested in me personally. I value these relationships far more than any conference I have attended or degree that has been bestowed on me.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Jesus had friends.*** Close friends. Who are your friends? Your disciples? How do you associate with them in personal ways? Have the pressures of life and demands of work and family caused you to withdraw from people, the very people you were called to serve in leadership? If so, draw close to Jesus and allow Him to renew your calling to build lasting, intentional friendships.



## LESSON 5

# ***Leaders Choose Their Own Teams***

---

*This was the first of many signs that Jesus did... turning water into wine at a wedding feast. Because of it, His disciples believed and followed Him. Afterwards, He withdrew to a town called Capernaum with His closest disciples, and His mother and brothers, and He stayed there for several days.*

- John 2:11-12 (paraphrase)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Leadership*** comes with many pressures and countless responsibilities. But one of the great privileges is choosing who serves on our teams, whether that be a ministry team at church, or a leadership team in our business or school. Certainly, we look to God to lead us to the right people, but He allows us to partner with Him in this decision.

I would go so far as to say we should not include people on our teams that we do not select or approve. Though we must be open to accept those God sends us, and though others may expect us to “inherit” team members (especially in the corporate world), we must use wisdom and discernment to make these decisions.

If you work with volunteers, you should choose them carefully as well. I was advised early on by one of my mentors not to choose a person if their skill exceeded their character. In other words, character is crucial—faithful, available, and teachable.

When we examine the criteria Jesus followed in choosing Peter, James, John, and the other disciples, it may seem that

He was willing to accept anyone willing to join Him. In actuality, Jesus was very deliberate about building His core team. In John's Gospel, we learn that Jesus did not follow conventional wisdom in choosing His disciples. He didn't make his decisions based on appearance. Instead, He followed a rule many leaders overlook: He based His choices on who would most appreciate being chosen (adapted from *The Leadership Lessons of Jesus*).<sup>1</sup>

How do we go about selecting a leadership team? Far too many of us accept the first person that is eager to join us, without taking time to probe deeper. Don't let desperation for help drive your team building!

Effective leaders have a clearly defined set of qualifications for team members. Jesus chose team members prudently. Notice the profile of His core team members: young men in their late teens or early 20s, Galileans, non-clergy. He didn't choose any Judeans, nor religious leaders, nor elders, nor women (for cultural purposes, but not for theological reasons—see Luke 8:3).

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***What*** sort of selection criteria should you follow in selecting your team? There are “10 Cs” I have followed through the years that have served me well:

### **THE 10 CS – TEAM SELECTION GUIDELINES**

1. **COURTESY** – Do they know how to respect other team members? Are they collaborative in their approach to decision making?
2. **CHEMISTRY** – Do they have good chemistry with you as the team leader and with others on the team? Are they likeable? Can they have a good time with those they work with?

3. COMPETENCE – Do they have the skills necessary to add strength to the team?
4. CHARACTER – Do they display servant leadership qualities? Do they show integrity? Are they reliable and do they keep promises?
5. CORE VALUES – Are their core values aligned with those of the rest of the team?
6. COURAGE – Are they willing to take risks? Do they exercise faith and take on new challenges when called upon?
7. CAPACITY – Do they have the emotional capacity for leadership responsibility? Can they handle stress and pressure?
8. CULTURE – Do they work well with people of other cultures? Are they sensitive and adaptive to different cultural contexts?
9. CALLING/COMMITMENT – What are their spiritual gifts? Do their gifts complement the team? Do they have a clear call from God to serve with you?
10. CLEAR EXPECTATIONS – Have you discussed your expectations and theirs?

Some of my greatest joys and greatest sorrows have come from my team-building experiences. If you work with people (especially closely on a team), you will learn and grow, or you will fail. There is no middle ground.

One of my leadership assignments from God was to pastor a church in the United States. After much discussion, I was invited to be the senior leader of the church. I had to decide whether I would invite the previous pastoral staff members to stay on as part of my team. I asked them to stay, thinking that having familiar faces on my staff would provide a sense of stability to the church. They were great people, but in the

end, it became apparent we lacked relational chemistry and the trust that is necessary to work well together.

Working closely with others on teams has exposed serious weaknesses in my life, but with that, has come the opportunity for accelerated growth—both spiritual growth and growth as a developing leader. Being confronted about my weaknesses and being loved in spite of them by a team of close associates is a very empowering experience.

A leadership team can fulfill a functional role of getting tasks or projects accomplished, but it can also be much more than that. Some teams build deeper relationships—transparency and trust are the ingredients that can take a group beyond its ordinary expression. Regardless if the team is task-oriented or deeply relational, leaders should expect to learn much about themselves and others through the experience.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Team building*** presents many opportunities to learn humility and grow in wisdom.

Take a moment and reflect on your team-leading experiences:

- What are your fondest memories?
- What are some painful, but vital, lessons you have learned leading teams?
- What are the most important lessons you learned from being part of teams others have led?
- List the top three lessons and discuss them with your team.



## LESSON 6

### ***Buy-In***

---

*Jesus' mother said to the disciples, "Whatever He says to you, do it."  
- John 2:5*

#### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Buy-in*** is believing in a leader. Those who know a leader best are the most likely to give wholehearted support to their leader. These people buy into, or invest in, a relationship first—and then the person's vision.

Jesus' mother believed in Jesus, beyond loving Him as her son. She believed in Him and His calling so wholeheartedly that she told His disciples to do "whatever" He said.

Through close association with Him, Jesus' disciples bought into Jesus and His vision too. They even became willing to die for Him. Every effective leader has a core team of people who believe in the leader personally, and because they believe in their leader, they believe in the vision.

Buy-in involves sacrifice, time, and enthusiastic support. If the people you lead don't invest their time, money, or personal commitment—if they don't put their heart on the line for you—they have not fully bought into the vision. This usually means they have not bought into you as a person. That doesn't necessarily mean your character and credibility are in question, it may just mean they need to get to know you better.

One way to determine whom we can lead effectively is to consider the person's buy-in. The ones who are "with you" whole-heartedly are the ones you have authority to lead.

## LESSON LEARNED

***While a first year student*** at Taylor University in the United States, I became good friends with a fellow student named Sam Shellhammer. Sam asked me if I would like to join him and some other students for a daily time of Bible study and prayer.

I was enthusiastic until I learned what time the Bible study met each day. When Sam said the guys met at 5:30, that initially sounded okay to me (since 5:30 only happened once a day in my world of late night fun at the residence hall). When I found out he meant 5:30 a.m., I had to think twice!

What ultimately attracted me to Sam's vision was Sam himself. He earned my buy-in because I believed in who he was. I saw a man of spiritual passion, sincerity, and personal warmth. As a result, I formed a lifelong friendship with Sam, and I grew to love setting aside my early mornings for time with the Lord.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***We shouldn't expect*** others to buy into us as leaders if we have not bought into another leader ourselves. May we never reach a point in our lives where we no longer attract people to Jesus because they are not attracted to us. It is not simply our charisma or personality that compels people to buy into our vision, but our authenticity, our believability—our Christ-likeness.

Are your team members buying into you because you have bought deeply into Jesus? We can't rely on yesterday's buy-in if we are to maintain momentum and passion within our teams. Our relationships with Christ have to be up-to-date and full of passion and compelling Christ-likeness.





## LESSON 7

# ***Leading with Discernment***

---

*Many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men...*

– John 2:23–25

*“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”*

– John 7:24

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Effective leaders*** must be discerning. It’s important to look below the surface of people’s words and actions to see the deeper motives and character issues.

Exercising discernment is not about being critical or judgmental, but about looking beyond appearances. Leaders must be discerning if they are to know the strengths and weaknesses of those they lead or work closely with.

Jesus was discerning. John 6:61–64 says, “When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you? There are some of you who do not believe.’”

There is a great difference between being a cynic and being discerning. Leaders who have been hurt, experienced betrayal, or have been wounded by criticism and rejection, sometimes become wary of people. They perform their ministry duties—perhaps with great flair—but at the core, they carry an offended spirit. Such leaders sow seeds of mistrust and suspicion in their followers.

A discerning leader reads people’s hearts without withdrawing from them.

Discernment and judgment come from the same root word in the Greek language, but are very different in practice. “To judge” comes from the Greek word *krino*, meaning to judge and separate (and in some cases, to condemn). “To discern” comes from *diakrino*, which means to distinguish, to hesitate, to investigate thoroughly. The prefix *dia* means into or through.

To judge, then, is to pass sentence on a person, to label them, and potentially write them off. On the other hand, to discern means to see through a façade (beyond face value), to look deeper into something, to see what others may not readily see.

Discernment is a vital leadership quality because it creates depth in a leader. Discerning leaders foresee trouble before it arises and prepare for it. They see the difference between talent and character, between right actions and wrong motives. They spot frauds, false prophets/teachers, and those with secret sins before others do. Discerning leaders are not easily deceived. They appreciate good endeavors by others, but notice when actions are not aligned with genuine values.

Paul warned the Galatians about the need for discernment:

But there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the Gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed... (Gal. 1:7-9)

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***My father*** was a Pentecostal pastor. Sadly, he came across many frauds and charlatans in his day. Because Pentecostals place a high value on personal experience, they tend to be more vulnerable to those who can imitate genuine spiritual experience but lack godly character.

Though my dad was a man of passionate spirituality, he was not fooled by superficial emotion. He was ardent for the things of the Spirit, but learned not to confuse spiritual passion with emotional hype. He placed great value on the fruit of the Spirit, which can be imitated for a time by the immature, but cannot be sustained under pressure.

To those who are discerning, people who wear a phony piety come across tinny, shallow, and are easy to spot. It can seem easier and less costly to wear spirituality like a coat, but true spirituality comes from deep within. It is developed through obedience to God's Word, and through sacrifice and surrender to the work of the cross in one's life.

The writer of Hebrews says mature Christians have so absorbed the Word of God that they can discern what is of God and what is not, and see the difference between what is great and what is good. They develop a sensitivity to what is true and what is false, to what may be good but is not the best in a situation.

Here's how Hebrews 5:13-14 describes this level of discernment:

For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the Word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

What can we do when we discern weakness or things that need attention in the lives of others, including our spouses, close friends, co-workers, or spiritual leaders?

- See the good. Look for their potential and their calling from God. Only when we appreciate their strengths can we properly evaluate their weaknesses.
- Pray for them. Pray for God's love to fill your heart for them.

- Make sure there is no unhealthy dependence on that person in you.
- Forgive them if they have offended you.
- If you are unsure about something that seems wrong or troubles you, don't ignore it. Ask kind, but probing, questions.
- Don't hesitate to ask help from godly counselors. They are there to help guide your responses.
- If you feel uncomfortable or uneasy about someone, pay attention to those feelings until you understand why they are there. This could be God's way of catching your attention. By paying heed to inner promptings, we grow in discernment and confidence in hearing the voice of God.
- There are many wonderful ministries and movements in the Body of Christ, but not all share the same vision and values. Discernment allows you to distinguish the difference between those you are called to appreciate, and those you are called to closely associate with.
- Don't gossip to others about your discernment of sin or character weakness in a person's life. If it is causing disunity, division, deception, or damage to others around them, first pray for God's love for the person, pray for their heart to be prepared, then go directly to the person and speak lovingly, but truthfully, about what you discern. Follow the steps of Matthew 18:15–20: "Go alone to the person, if they don't repent go with someone, and if there is no change, then go to their church leaders about the situation."

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***We develop*** spiritual discernment by paying attention to the inner "still small voice" of the Holy Spirit. We grow in

discernment over time if we saturate our minds with God's Word.

According to Hebrews 5, the truth of God's Word enables us to discern between right and wrong. If the Holy Spirit highlights something or someone that needs attention, avoid the temptation to judge, but do discern. Investigate and pay attention to what the Holy Spirit may want to teach you.



## LESSON 8

# ***Complicity Versus Confrontation***

---

*Jesus found corrupt merchants in the temple at Passover time. Some of them were changing money and adding unfair exchange fees, and others were selling sick animals for sacrifices. Jesus made a whip of leather cords, then drove all the so-called business people out of the temple grounds, with their sheep and oxen right behind them. Then He overturned the money-changers' tables and scattered their money everywhere. He glared at them and said, "Take these corrupt practices out of here – go on, get out! Don't ever try again to turn my Father's house into a place for personal gain!"*

– John 2:13-14 (paraphrase)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***The great privilege of leadership*** is influencing other people's lives. The grave responsibility of leadership is confronting sin in people's lives. This is part of the price of leadership.

Complicity is knowing about immoral, illegal, or unethical activity—and covering it up through silence. It is saying nothing when something should be said.

Those who accept the privilege of leading must also accept the responsibility. Invested leaders help mold and shape the actions and attitudes of those they lead. They offer correction as needed, especially if certain actions and attitudes negatively impact the lives of others. Leaders set the moral and spiritual tone for what happens around them.

The Old Testament prophet Eli is an example of a leader who refused to confront the sins of his own sons. As a result, God punished the sons and held Eli responsible for his silence. (1 Sam. 2:22-36)

It takes courage and kindness to confront people in the right way. No mature leader—whether a father, mother, manager, teacher, coach, mentor, or spiritual leader—enjoys confrontation. What could cause a leader to fail to confront people when needed? Most often, it is dependence on the approval of others.

In *The Maxwell Leadership Bible*, John Maxwell says courageous leaders are willing to do “the unpopular to accomplish the unforgettable.”<sup>[1](#)</sup>

Jesus could confront people in the temple because He did not need their approval. He was not leading out of a desire to be accepted by people. He was secure in His identity as a servant leader and therefore, courageous and free to commit to righteousness.

When Jesus threw the money-changers out of the temple, those with spiritual discernment knew He was a loving shepherd who was serious about confronting injustice.

People feel safe when they know their leaders will speak up for them, defend them, and not allow false teachers, false prophets, or unethical people to harass them or divide the church.

How did driving the money-changers out of the temple show good leadership?

- A strong leader defends his followers, as well as the marginalized and oppressed.
- A loving leader stands up for the underdog.
- A courageous leader won't allow anyone to hinder his people from having the opportunity to worship freely.
- A godly leader speaks out against economic injustice.
- A God-fearing leader won't allow conflict of interest.
- A Kingdom leader will not be complicit with sin.

- A discerning leader will not allow others under them to compromise their reputation by remaining silent, rather than speaking the truth in love.

## LESSON LEARNED

***I recently received a letter*** from a young man, thanking me for confronting him. Two years prior, he had been allowing a serious compromise in his life to continue unchecked (and was quite boastful about it). I knew I could not simply turn a blind eye.

Accepting this responsibility wasn't easy. I had to be willing to face a potentially uncomfortable conversation. It meant setting aside time for many meetings with him, as well as spending hours in prayer and Bible study to make sure my attitude and scriptural position was in line. The young man was very popular in our community and everyone was watching to see how I handled the situation.

The invested hours proved fruitful and the man was rescued from deception. The situation also provided an opportunity to model how to be patient, yet firm—both to the young man and to those looking on.

There is a great pressure in our society not to be a “snitch.” Young people are especially under pressure not to “tell on” others. It's true, there is a right way and wrong way to bring things to light. We need to pray before speaking to discern whether our motives are pure or impure. Our motivation should not be self-righteous, or to point a finger. But God's Word is clear: if we know about sin in people's lives yet remain silent, we are an accomplice to the sin in God's eyes.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***What might prevent*** you from speaking up about sin? Ask God to search your heart and reveal any insecurity



or need for approval (see lesson one). It is important to teach this principle to those we lead, to arm them for the day when they will be tempted to commit the sin of complicity.

How could you go about training those you lead to appreciate this important leadership lesson?



## LESSON 9

# ***The Principle of the Relaxed Grasp***

---

*But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.*

- John 2:24

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Needy leaders*** are grasping leaders. If leaders trust God to bring them the people they need, people will sense their security and be more likely to feel safe with them and follow their lead.

Insecurity comes in all forms. An insecure disposition can develop over time as a poor response to difficult circumstances. A deeper form of insecurity is a manifestation of pride. This can be very damaging in the life of an ambitious leader; it can cause us to claim people as “ours” rather than recognize they belong to the Lord. They are only ours to the degree that we care for them as Jesus cared for His followers.

Pride in the life of leaders makes them self-serving and blind to other’s needs. Pride leads to presumption and presumption leads to possessiveness. It takes a large dose of humility to put the needs and dreams of others above your own. A humble leader is the kind of leader others trust with their future dreams and aspirations.

Leadership is a privilege, not a right. It is a privilege to serve others, and with great privilege comes great responsibility. But some leaders confuse the difference

between fulfilling their responsibility and thinking they have the right to insist on things being done their way.

In his incisive book, *Why Leaders Can't Lead*, Warren Bennis speaks candidly on the difference between leading people and managing them. After studying the lives of effective leaders, he concluded that leaders are people who do the right thing while managers are people who strive to ensure that people under them do things right.<sup>1</sup> While both roles are crucial, they differ profoundly. It is the difference between those who hold their people with a relaxed grasp, and those who grip them as if they own them.

People don't respond well to being over-managed and under-led. They want to be led by those they believe in. If they have bought into you as a leader, they want you to lead them—but not micromanage them.

The principle of the relaxed grasp is about releasing people into God's hands so He can put them into yours. We don't serve in order to be good leaders, but we're more likely to be good leaders if we serve people rather than grasping them as ours. If we serve people well, we influence them, and if we influence them, then we have spiritual authority in their lives. Serving equals influence equals authority.

Those who do not take hold of this Jesus-approach to leadership assume they have the right to insist on people submitting to them and respecting them.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***When I was leading*** a missions training center in Holland, a friend confronted me. He said, "You see people for how they can meet your needs and help you fulfill your vision...God wants to change that. God wants you to see people for how you can help them fulfill their vision, not yours. If you will hold people with a relaxed grasp, with your hands open, God will fill your hands with more leaders than you know what to do with. But if you hold onto them tightly,

then your hands will be full and God cannot give you more people...especially the right people.”

I was offended when I heard these words of rebuke. But they were true. My anger was from guilt. I was an insecure leader who had more vision than character, and who held onto volunteers and staff as if they were my own, not the Lord's.

With the help of persistent prompting from the Lord, I took this realization to heart and began to practice servant leadership. When I stopped using people to fulfill my vision and began serving them to see their visions fulfilled, the prophetic words of my friend came to pass many times over. There has never been a shortage of other leaders in my life. My hands have been full.

Yes, God gives us vision as leaders, and we should share that vision passionately with others with the hope that God will send people to help us fulfill the vision. But we must be careful about letting our passion overrule our compassion. The sincere attitude of wanting to serve people will demonstrate that we are the right ones to link up with. We become the kind of leaders people can trust and support, because we care not only about our cause, but about them.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Are your hands open*** to receive and release others? Are you a “releasing leader”? Releasing leaders have settled the deeper issues that cause insecurity. They have confronted pride; they are willing to serve. Servant leadership is a lifelong journey of learning what it means to put others first, of learning over and over again the great privilege we're given when God puts people into our hands to lead and care for.



## LESSON 10

# ***Prophetic Voice***

---

*“Get your things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a shopping mall!”*

– Jesus, John 2:16 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Jesus raised His voice*** against corrupt merchants in the temple, and in doing so gave leaders for all time an example of the importance of speaking against injustice.

A little background is helpful to understand why Jesus was provoked to action. Worshippers came to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire to observe the annual Passover feast. Because they were traveling long distances, they were not able to bring sacrificial animals with them.

The traders in the temple took advantage of the people by selling sacrificial animals at exorbitant prices. This prevented many people from being able to worship God with their sacrifices (as required by Jewish law).

The money-changers took advantage of people as well. All Jewish males 20 years of age or older were required to pay an annual “temple tax.” The money-changers demanded outrageous fees for buying the local currency that was required to pay the tax.

Jesus was a prophetic voice against injustice. He spoke up on behalf of those who had no voice. True shepherds raise their voices to protect their sheep. Those who speak up against injustice create a safe place for those who have experienced abuse and injustice.

## LESSON LEARNED

***I live in Africa.*** Cape Town has been my home since 2006, though my wife and I have traveled in many African countries since 1970. One of the saddest developments we have witnessed in African Christianity is the spread of the so-called “prosperity gospel.” Unscrupulous preachers and evangelists are making promises to the poor—cars, jobs, health, and healing—if they give to the “man of God.”

It is grievous to see spiritual leaders prospering from the poor, creating false hope in the hearts of the hopeless. True shepherds cannot be silent about such evil.

Speaking prophetically against injustice does not mean we are called to speak publicly against those of different political persuasions. To the contrary, those in leadership roles should not use their position to advocate one political party over another. We can and should address issues—but not persons or parties. The church and the office should be safe places for people of different political persuasions to participate without coming under personal attack for their views.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***Who in your community*** is being oppressed by unfair business practices? Is there a way to speak up on their behalf? It could be that you are to be the voice for those who fear losing their jobs in a corporate setting. If you are silent, you may risk becoming a organizational eunuch, a person who keeps the peace but in the process loses integrity. Don’t remain silent to maintain the illusion of harmony if important principles are at stake.



## LESSON 11

# ***Preferential Treatment***

---

*There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."*

- John 3:1-2

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***In chapter two*** of John's Gospel account, we read of Jesus driving unjust merchants and money-changers from the temple. Directly following this, in chapter three, Jesus welcomes a member of the very class of people who allowed these injustices to take place.

Jesus welcomed both poor and rich, those without rank in society and those who enjoyed privilege and power. It was not the status of the rich and powerful that offended Jesus, but the abuse of their power. He welcomed all those who demonstrated spiritual hunger.

### **LESSON LEARNED**

***I have had the privilege*** of meeting ambassadors and leaders of government, heads of major corporations, and mayors of cities and towns. What stands out to me about many of the leaders I have met is how approachable they are.

Truly great people are not impressed by their own positions or power. They make time for people. And they're great conversationalists.

Everyone has a story. American Ambassador William Turner and his wife, Cynthia, always amazed me with their ability to engage people in conversation, no matter their rank in life. Whether speaking to prostitutes or priests, they impressed me over and over again at their ability to ask simple, heartfelt questions and then listen earnestly to the responses.

Insecure leaders want people to hear about them. But secure and effective leaders want to hear about others.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Do you give*** equal respect to both the wealthy and the marginalized of society? In some circles, it is popular to welcome the poor but the rich and powerful are looked upon with mistrust. Or vice versa. Jesus didn't show preferences. He welcomed all who received Him, no matter their race, gender, or role.





## LESSON 12

# ***Connecting and Chemistry***

---

*A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."*

*- John 4:7*

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***The lady*** who has become known as the "woman at the well" is a mystery to us. We don't know her name. We only know she was of a snubbed gender and a despised race. Yet Jesus connected with her and something remarkable transpired. Through this story, we learn about the value of connecting with others—this ability is sometimes called emotional intelligence.

People don't connect easily with frowning, emotionally sensitive, intense, defensive leaders. We can only lead to the degree that we can emotionally connect with people. Leaders who are out of touch with how they come across, who lack emotional intelligence, are limited in their effectiveness.

There are four components to leadership "connectedness" we can draw from the story of the Samaritan woman at the well.

### **FOUR COMPONENTS TO LEADERSHIP**

1. **SELF-AWARENESS** – Jesus was secure in His identity, which gave Him the confidence to step over racial and religious barriers to connect with the woman at the well. He recognized and understood His own moods and emotions and did not allow them to hinder His ability to

connect with people. Put simply, He was aware of His own actions, words, and feelings, but focused on others.

2. SELF-MANAGEMENT – Jesus was able recognize and control any negative emotions or presumptions that had been passed on to Him regarding Samaritans. He was in control of His moods and impulses. Jesus was prepared to challenge the accepted norms of racial and gender separation that dominated the Jewish religion. Healthy leaders can self-manage their lives. They are not dependent on public opinion (or even close friends) to do the right thing for others.
3. HEALTHY EMPATHY – Jesus had the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people. He perceived the discomfort and guilt of the woman at the well. He had developed the character quality of relating to people according to their needs, rather than His own.
4. SOCIAL SKILL – Jesus was proficient at building and maintaining relationships beyond the cadre of disciples. He enjoyed close relationship with the disciples, but was not dependent on them alone for friendship and company. He was accessible, non-exclusive, and truly cared about all people, not only His inner circle.

Why is the leadership lesson of connection and chemistry so important? Simply put, you cannot lead people you cannot relate to.

Connection, when genuine, allows us to build bridges of trust and understanding to people who may be different from ourselves. We can provide emotional warmth, listen attentively, smile, offer encouragement and affirmation, show genuine interest, and display faith in people. It's also important that we are not defensive and do not overreact in the face of adversity. By fostering the genuine desire to relate to others, we can develop chemistry with them, which makes them more willing to receive our leadership.

In the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well, Jesus was able to make a connection by being willing to overcome barriers of gender, racial prejudice, immoral behavior, theological difference, and initial personal rejection.

Let's take a closer look at how Jesus fostered this connection:

- He went out of His way to meet her. (verse 4)
- He initiated the conversation. (verse 7)
- He listened and allowed her to speak. (verse 9)
- He showed respect, regardless of her gender and status. (verse 9)
- He aroused spiritual interest in her by casting a vision for something greater than she had imagined. (verses 10-15)
- He entered into her world, that is, He built a bridge to her world. (verses 13-24)
- He did not try to control her or pressure her to join Him. (verses 13-15)
- He inspired her to go as far as she was willing to go in her spiritual journey. (verses 15-18)
- He accepted her where she was. (verses 17-18)
- He did not convey disappointment in her choices. (verse 18)
- He focused on key issues for her future. (verses 20-24)
- He communicated directly and simply to her, in language she could understand. (verses 25-26)

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***Throughout my life,*** I have been mentored by some great “connectors.” One of the greatest was Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With A Mission. As I watched

him in action, I was struck again and again by how Loren connected with people. In big crowds or small, he would focus on one individual at a time, smile warmly, ask them questions, and listen to them attentively. Then he would challenge and encourage them to do something great for God. That is connecting.

Loren planted the seeds of greatness and great achievement in the hearts of many young leaders by challenging them to go beyond what they had dreamed or thought of doing before that time. Then he would give them an opportunity to do what he had just encouraged them to dream about. He didn't just inspire and walk away, he invested in the relationship and took the connection a step further. That is chemistry.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Step one*** in connecting with people is reaching across any perceived or real barriers. Take a few moments to reflect on the people you lead who are different from yourself.

Think wider about those God wants you to influence who have not yet come to faith in Jesus. Are you actively working at reaching across age, gender, class, and racial barriers to connect with them?

Think deeper as well as wider. Do you react if people give you advice you don't like? Do you send the message that you want to listen attentively, learn from what people say to you, and are prepared to engage in deeper conversation?



## LESSON 13

# ***Leading Unlikelies***

---

*Many of the Samaritans from that village committed themselves to Jesus because of the woman's witness: "He knew all about the things I did. He knows me inside and out!" They asked Him to stay on, so Jesus stayed two days. A lot more people entrusted their lives to Him when they heard what He had to say. They said to the woman, "We're no longer taking this on your say-so. We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Savior of the world!"*

- John 4:39-42 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Jesus loves terrorists.*** He loves Muslims. He loves rebels, critics, Democrats, liberals, gays, socialists, Communist comrades, Republicans, sassy teenagers, Goths, pot smokers, and ex-cons. Even worse, He wants them in His church. He even wants them on the front row of *your* church.

In John 4, Jesus reached out to a crass, sleeping-around woman, and then went with her to the village to reach her friends as well. Jesus led a lot of "unlikelies."

### **JESUS' LOT OF UNLIKELIES**

- ZACCHAEUS - Jesus invited Himself to the home of a treacherous tax collector, not worrying about public opinion.
- Woman caught in adultery - Jesus forgave an adulteress without first insisting that she confess her sins and make things right.
- PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN - Jesus hung out with rough fishermen, synagogue rejects, violent terrorists, and soldiers of the occupational forces.

- SIMON THE ZEALOT – Jesus called an urban terrorist to be on His team. The Zealots were an illegal political faction, committed to the violent overthrow of the Romans.

Jesus was born Bethlehem but raised in Nazareth, a Galilean fishing village. He recruited a crew of fishermen—unlikely leaders among the young men of Galilee—as His first disciples, the future leaders of His movement. He didn't start with graduates of the best Torah schools or followers of the most respected rabbis as His first disciples. He modeled the principle that it is better to raise up insiders than to import outsiders.

## LESSON LEARNED

***A pastor friend*** recently told me a story of welcoming a known prostitute to his church congregation. At a church function for young people, she stripped down to a bikini and jumped in the swimming pool with the rest of the youth swimming at the party. Watching some older parishioners in his church looking at her with wide eyes and hard stares, he decided to prevent the certain judgment they were going to visit on the woman. He took off his shoes and jumped in the pool with her...clothes and all!

There are unlikelies all around us who have dismissed the church but are fascinated with Jesus. The most secure and courageous leaders are willing to risk rejection from the religious to reach the unlikelies.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***Consider*** your circle of relationships. Is there anyone you might have overlooked for leadership training and development? Make a list of the least-likely candidates for leadership mentoring. Ask the Lord if you have overlooked anyone on that list.



## LESSON 14

# ***Imperative People***

---

*Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."*

- John 5:8-10

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Another way to describe*** the religious leaders of Jesus' day would be "imperative." Imperative people must be in control. The Pharisees who confronted the lame man are a prime example.

Imperative people:

- Are uncomfortable with people whose ideas are different from their own
- Have an inborn craving for control
- Are driven by duty
- Hate to admit they are wrong
- Get irritated when people make "mistakes"
- Do important jobs themselves because someone else might not do them right
- Create dependency on themselves
- Act superior but feel inferior

The Jewish leaders who opposed the paralytic that Jesus healed were concerned with only two things: conformity and control. It didn't matter to them that a lame man was

healed. Their petty concern was that he was carrying his bed on the Sabbath.

It's as if they were saying, "Shame on you, healed man. Wait until tomorrow to be excited. Don't carry your bed now that you can walk...just lay there and be calm!"

Obviously, these imperative people were not focused on the right thing. They were more concerned with their petty religious traditions than the joy of a man whose lame legs were made whole. They followed the "letter of the law," but disregarded the Spirit of Truth. They read God's Word but had no understanding of its true meaning. The Scriptures were a pretext for them to control and manipulate others.

One of the greatest challenges you will face as a leader is imperative people who don't want to yield their supremacy over a church, school, classroom, or work department. Imperative people feel strongly obligated to direct the behavior of other people—beyond their mandate. They have an inner need to command, to exhort, or direct the lives of others. Imperative people are a bane to leaders who want to get things done for God.

When Jesus healed the lame man, He modeled acting according to the motive behind all biblical truth—God's love for us. The Pharisees, and many Evangelical Christians still today, fall into the trap of trying to follow the letter of truth; they try to obey the Bible without fathoming the love of the One who gave us the Bible. Perhaps worse yet, they issue judgment when others do not act in accordance with their personal interpretation of biblical truths.

When more weight is given to literal interpretation of the words written to convey biblical truth than the intent of the One who gave us that truth, it ends up being more man-centered than God-centered. Obeying the letter of the law is a matter of physical action, but obeying the Spirit of Truth requires more than just outward action—it involves a loving attitude of the heart and mind.



To refrain from adultery is obedience to the letter of the law, but to exercise restraint in one's thought life is obedience to the Spirit of Truth (e.g., not lusting in one's heart for another man's wife, or any woman or man for that matter).

Great leaders don't try to monitor or control the behavior of their followers according to the letter of the law. Instead, they seek to motivate obedience from the heart by equipping people to act as independent adults, not dependent children. Healthy, independent adults can think for themselves; children need their parents to think for them.

The teachings of Jesus are revolutionary because He taught obedience to the Spirit of Truth. He didn't annul the Ten Commandments, He expanded them, revealing their spiritual intent. He didn't annul the law against murder, but taught us not to hate or judge others from the heart.

In the same Spirit as Jesus, mature spiritual leaders empower their people to look at problems from a biblical perspective, then spiritually discern the intended application of biblical truth for those specific circumstances. The best teacher in town is not a human being, but the Holy Spirit. As leaders, our followers have the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit within them, the Spirit of Truth, to teach and guide them as they apply biblical truths to their lives.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***My father*** used to say to me, "Son, if you are going to get on your knees to pray through your conviction about something, stay there long enough to get that conviction for yourself and not everyone else!"

Though I grew up surrounded by imperative people in our conservative Evangelical church, I am so thankful my dad was mature enough to see through the superficial religious veneer of many of his peers.

Dad fought his way through the rubbish of imperative religion to find a deeply felt, but lovingly held, set of convictions. He was beloved as a pastor because he was not judgmental when parishioners came to him about an alcohol problem or confessed that their daughter was on drugs. Dad was deeply compassionate when a single mother was overwhelmed and depressed by the burdens of caring for two or three children alone. Dad had convictions, deeply held biblical convictions, but he held them with love. He gave others space to come to their own beliefs.

To apply these truths to my own life, I had to learn the difference between following the letter of the law versus the Spirit of Truth. It means being flexible rather than rigid; being a person of conviction, but not imposing your convictions on others. It means giving others freedom to apply biblical truth for themselves—with loving accountability.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Most of us*** have some imperative characteristics. It becomes a weakness when we allow them to disrupt our relationships with family, business associates, and friends. When that happens, we need to back off and learn how keep a potential strength—leading with conviction—from becoming a damaging weakness.

To live in freedom, imperative people must yield to these truths:

- God is absolute, we are not. Give others space to come to their own convictions.
- We are not responsible for people, God is. Trust the Holy Spirit to correct, convict, and guide others.
- Cultivating relationships is more important than being right. Live from the inside out, not the outside in (i.e., from the heart, not the head).

Freedom is the key word here. Imperative people have to learn to allow others to be themselves, and—this is sometimes even more difficult—to allow themselves to relax and simply be themselves.

Freedom from being an imperative leader means influencing others without controlling them. There is a time and place to clarify expectations and commitments, but there is a line between doing that and becoming the religious police. It means cultivating contentment in your heart about your convictions and allowing others the same freedom.

If you recognize imperative tendencies in yourself, here are some steps you can take toward freedom:

- Identify any controlling or judgmental inclinations you might harbor and humbly acknowledge them to others.
- Understand how the drive to control others has worked in your life to the detriment of others.
- Yield to God's change in your life through repentance, confession, and forgiveness.



## LESSON 15

# ***Leadership Tests: No One Likes Them and We All Go Through Them***

---

*The Jewish Passover festival was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for He already had in mind what He was going to do.*

*- John 6:4-6*

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***God tests leaders.*** In this scene from Jesus' ministry to the multitudes, Jesus asks a seemingly innocuous question to test Philip.

Later in the Gospels, we learn that Philip was most likely an accountant, a man who dealt in exact numbers and precise records. When Jesus tested Philip, if we listen carefully, we can hear an unwarranted response from Philip to Jesus: "We don't have enough money to do this...we only have two hundred denarii and besides, this is not in our budget."

What Philip did not say is, "I trust you, Master."

A leadership test is a crucible that, by its nature, is intended by God to be a transforming experience. God does not initiate every human situation that tests us, but He uses them all.

As a 21-year-old leader, I asked God one morning to teach me "His ways." Earlier that morning, I had read these words from Psalm 103:7: "He made known His ways to Moses, His

acts to the children of Israel.” I realized I knew little of God’s ways, especially His ways in developing leaders.

I have since discovered that there are indeed certain “ways” God works in and through leaders’ lives. To discern His ways is to ease the path of our service to God.

Neglecting to discern His ways is to wander through life blindfolded, unable to see the path ahead.

A leadership test is a crisis, big or small, that God uses to teach us to depend more deeply on Him. Testing is one of the least understood aspects of God’s ways. We often ignore God’s testing in our lives, to our great detriment.

As leaders pass through tests, they discover God’s goodness in new dimensions. They gain confidence that He can and will meet them in the crisis experiences of life.

In his crucial leadership book, *The Making of a Leader*, Robert Clinton says, “Not only does God meet the leader in the situation, but He does so with a solution that is tailor-made for the leader. The overall effect is a more confident leader.”<sup>1</sup>

God-orchestrated tests in leaders’ lives usually produce one of two results: drawing them closer to God, or pushing them further from God. Identifying the nature and purpose of the tests can help us move toward God, instead of away from Him. But that is a choice we must make for ourselves—God will not force us to trust Him.

One way to view the Bible is as a collection of leadership biographies that narrate the various kinds of tests God takes leaders through. By identifying and naming the tests we go through, we recognize that we are not alone in our experience and that God has good reasons for allowing us to go through tests. Most importantly, it gives us perspective.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8–10, Paul describes the lessons he learned from the difficult tests he passed through:

We don’t want you in the dark, friends, about how hard it was when all this came down on us in Asia province. It

was so bad we didn't think we were going to make it. We felt like we'd been sent to death row, that it was all over for us. As it turned out, it was the best thing that could have happened. Instead of trusting in our own strength or wits to get out of it, we were forced to trust God totally—not a bad idea since He's the God who raises the dead! (The Message)

Below are the components of unique tests we go through as individuals and the common tests most leaders go through at some point.

### COMPONENTS OF GOD-APPOINTED TESTS

- DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES (OR A CRISIS) – If it wasn't difficult, it wouldn't be a test.
- DESIRED RESPONSE – God wants us to seek Him.
- DELIGHT – God delights in our growth as we develop deeper dependence on Him. This is the reward He gives us for passing the test.

### COMMON TESTS FOR LEADERS

- REJECTION – Dismissal by friends, family, or trusted co-workers
- ISOLATION – A wilderness time of loneliness or confusion
- GOD'S SILENCE – When God does not speak
- INTEGRITY – To be true to our convictions no matter how hard
- HEARING GOD'S VOICE – Knowing it is God speaking
- OBEDIENCE – Doing what God says, no matter the cost
- LAYING DOWN OUR RIGHTS – Not insisting on having our way
- WORD TEST – Obeying God's direction to us

- FAITH TEST – Believing God in spite of overwhelming odds

All leaders are tested, but not all recognize the test and its importance for their development as wise and faithful leaders. It is hard enough to go through the test, but even more difficult to go through it and not have an understanding of what the test is.

## LESSON LEARNED

***At one point in my life,*** I went through an isolation test. I lived in a beautiful part of the United States, the Rocky Mountains, and was surrounded by close friends, yet it was a test of isolation nonetheless.

I didn't know what the test was at the time, but I sensed God was up to something. I often cried out to Him for understanding about the nature of my test. I knew about leadership testing, I understood God's ways, but I lacked a personal, Holy Spirit revelation about the nature of my test. Many times I prayed: "Please Lord, just show me what the test is, Lord, and with your help, I will pass it."

Then one day a friend visited my wife and me. "I wondered what's happening in your life, why you are stuck out here in the mountains, and now I know," he stated emphatically. "You are isolated. God has isolated you!"

In that moment it was like a light was turned on in my soul. I was going through an isolation test. I loved living in the mountains, but it was still a "wilderness" for me spiritually.

I began to study the people in the Bible who experienced significant periods of isolation. I got perspective from the Bible as to why God tested leaders with the isolation test.

An isolation test occurs when a leader is separated from normal involvement with people, work, or ministry—often for extended periods of time—but life carries on. On a physical

level, isolation can result from sickness, conflict with others, depression, or ministry or moral failure. Isolation can be a way of God cutting a person off from normal outlets of activity to put pressure on their soul.

God uses periods of isolation to create new levels of dependency on Him. For some of us, we can continue in our normal place of service, but still experience a profound sense of isolation. Some periods of isolation are a result of God withdrawing His grace, and as a result, deep levels of frustration are experienced.

God uses the “holy frustration” caused by isolation to draw us to Him. At times, He uses the frustration to prepare us for changes He wants to bring about in our lives. Some of those changes are internal in our character or identity, and in some instances, the change can be a career or geographical move.

We learn an imperative lesson from Jesus about passing our tests. No one has ever been tested to the degree Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is our supreme example of passing tests by being in total dependence on the Father. He prayed in the garden, “Father, let this cup pass from me, but nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.”

Are you prepared to pray this same prayer of surrender that Jesus prayed in the garden?

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***What major tests*** has God taken you through in your life? Take time to make a list of those tests. Put names on them, such as “isolation” test, or “rejection” test, “forgiveness” test, etc., and then write the significant life lessons you learned (or did not learn) as a result of the tests.

I suggest you read the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis as another example of a leader who was tested and what God accomplished in his life as a result.





## LESSON 16

# ***Don't Do Miracles by Yourself***

---

*Jesus said to His disciples, "Make the people sit down." Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed it to the disciples and they handed out the bread to those sitting down..."*

- John 6:10-13 (paraphrase)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Notice that Jesus*** did not do the miracle described in this passage directly Himself, but by working through His disciples. He performed the miracle, but involved others in its completion. Even though their faith was low, He still used the disciples. He trusted them to play an important role in spite of their unbelief.

Jesus gave the disciples the bread. They distributed it to the people and later gathered the leftovers. Surely Jesus could have performed this miracle easily, and more dramatically, without their help. But instead, He deliberately involved the disciples in a learning experience. As they participated, their eyes were opened to see the miracle taking place.

There are some key leadership lessons at work in this story:

- Leaders are more effective when they involve others.
- Disciples don't need to be mature to be involved.
- Self-discovery is more powerful than teaching discovery.
- Disciples learn more by doing than by watching.

- There are different learning styles for different people.

Jesus didn't just want to perform a miracle; He wanted to train His followers to believe. He was developing men of faith, not running a feeding program. He wanted His leaders to have compassion fueled by faith, so He engaged them by having them participate in the miracle.

He could have done it faster by Himself. He could have done it more efficiently by Himself. But He chose to trust an important responsibility to His men. Those who are prone to perfection find it very difficult to operate by this principle. These are the people who often say, "It's easier just to do it myself."

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***If you have*** a very strong predilection for neatness and excellence, allowing others to be involved who don't share your standards will be a severe test for you. The goal of good leadership is not always getting people to do things the "right" way, but instead, training them through the process.

Here is a challenge for those with high standards: there are times you may have to sacrifice getting things done your way in order to encourage more people to be involved.

Jesus didn't preach a message of "excellence," but He did speak often about the need for more workers. Multiplication of workers for the harvest is not incompatible with high standards. But leaders create cultures, and a culture of control for the sake of excellence can be a huge hindrance to mobilizing workers for the harvest.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Control*** can be an underlying issue if a leader is reluctant to involve others in important tasks. If you are a prisoner of your personality, you will insist on doing things

your way, no matter how it affects others. Take time to do some honest assessment. Ask yourself and others who work with you:

- Am I a controlling leader?
- Am I proficient at involving others?
- Do I get great satisfaction from seeing others learn by doing?



## LESSON 17

# ***When People Try to Make You King***

---

*When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

– John 6:15

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***In the inner depths*** of every leader, there is a desire to be needed, to be a hero, to fix things. It appeals to our ego to be important.

But be warned—if we find our significance by being put on a pedestal, it is only a matter of time until the same people will pull down the pedestal, and we will come tumbling down with it. The same people that make us kings will depose us when it suits them. Some of the very people who sought to make Jesus king, later turned on Him and chanted, “Crucify Him.”

Rather than seeking significance, serve people because God calls you to serve them—not because it meets a need in you or in others. There is a thin line between being compelled to meet people’s needs and being called by God to do so. A discerning leader will find that line and not step across it.

In 1 Samuel 8, the people of Israel demanded a king, wanting to be like the other countries around them. God gave them what they asked for, but in doing so was creating a test for the king (Saul) and a test for the Israelites as well. Saul failed his test and God removed him. The people failed

their test and God punished them. May we learn from this lesson and not insist on a human king or elevate any leader to a God-like status. As leaders, may we resist any such acclaim thrust upon us. May we trust in God alone.

Jesus responded to the demands of the people who wanted to make Him king by withdrawing to be alone. Perhaps the best place to be when we are tempted to be a king to people is to be alone with God and find out what it is in us that is attracted to stardom or power.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***As a younger leader,*** I found myself becoming political about my leadership role. I defended my position in the organization I served with at the time. I had an unhealthy need for the right title. I was offended when I was asked to change my title to one of “less stature.”

I am ashamed of my behavior when I look back now on those days. There were some dysfunctions in the organization, but that is no excuse for my immaturity.

Thankfully, God used those experiences to refine my character. It was a season of ministry maturing and I learned valuable lessons during that season. I am thankful for the leaders over me and with me at the time who set an example by responding with greater maturity and patience.

What was it in me that fought over those things? God was exposing my insecurities and my selfish ambition. I am thankful He did so, although at the time, it was not easy to humble myself and acknowledge my sinfulness.

I recall one co-worker saying, “Wow, these things are really important to you. Why is that?”

It was that piercing question that helped me step back and question myself. Thank God for people who are not enamored with having a king over them, who simply speak the truth.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***Do you receive the truth*** when spoken to you?

Perhaps there are steps you can take to encourage others to tell you when they disagree with you.

What steps can you take to build accountability and transparency in the community or corporation you lead?



## LESSON 18

# ***Finding Meaning in Times of Crisis***

---

*In the evening His disciples went down to the sea, got in the boat, and headed back across the water to Capernaum. It had grown quite dark and Jesus had not yet returned. A huge wind blew up, churning the sea. They were maybe three or four miles out when they saw Jesus walking on the sea, quite near the boat. They were scared senseless, but He reassured them, "It's me. It's all right. Don't be afraid." So they took Him on board. In no time they reached land the exact spot they were headed to."*

- John 6:16-21 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Leadership*** is proven through dark and stormy times. Extraordinary leaders find meaning in times of crisis. Such times are opportunities to become stronger, more confident leaders. These transformative events are not always caused by God, but He uses them to shape us.

Dark and stormy times are leadership crucibles that give us opportunity for deep self-reflection about our values, our leadership philosophy, and our purpose.

Here are the skills Jesus modeled when His disciples were facing the storm:

- Engage people to discover meaning in the storm. Jesus and His disciples were "in the same boat," as the saying goes. It was a time for them to learn from each other. To the degree that leaders can constructively and sensitively engage others, they can help them find meaning from a crisis. This means listening, comforting, and looking to God together.

- Discover and use a compelling voice. Jesus spoke compellingly to His disciples. Those who speak with confidence, openness, peace, and wisdom in the midst of a storm, learn and grow from the experience and encourage others to do the same.
- Act with integrity of purpose. Jesus was not impressed with the power of the storm. Leaders rise above fear, above pain, and lean hard into God and His Word to act with integrity of purpose. Dark and stormy times are not times to use religious clichés (“God knows,” “It’s all in the Lord’s hands,” etc.). Jesus saw meaning in the storm. It was that meaning that guided Him, not the storm itself or the reaction of His disciples to the storm.
- Cultivate “adaptive capacity.” This is the most crucial skill a leader can possess to lead others through a crisis. It is the ability to grasp context, to see the big picture, to learn from the storm itself, and to step back and gain perspective. Effective leaders learn to adapt—some gain perspective from prayer, others from asking good questions, still others draw on past experiences. Like Jesus, strong leaders are not emotionally reactive. Rather than getting lost in subjective personal responses, they increase their capacity to connect with others through difficult circumstances. These leaders remain hardy and hopeful despite disaster and difficulty.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***I was pastoring*** in the United States when the 9/11 terrorist attack took place in New York City. I quickly consulted with a close friend, then called the congregation together for prayer.

We agreed that a national time of tragedy was not a time to reason things through intellectually, cast blame on the



enemy, look for “sin in the camp,” or simplify such a complex issue as a spiritual attack.

I led the congregation to respond from the heart. We responded through prayer and scriptural reflection to acknowledge our feelings. Through that posture of honesty, we looked to God for comfort and to guide our attitudes and actions.

As a result, some members of the congregation decided to reach out to their Muslim neighbors and co-workers to assure them of their love and the love of Jesus. Others visited Muslim schools and community centers to take food accompanied by notes of friendship. We also ran an advertisement in the local newspaper to share our love as followers of Jesus with the Muslim community.

God used our responses to touch the hearts of many Muslims, open up deeply meaningful conversations, and be an example of how a city should respond in one of our nation’s darkest and stormiest times.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***List a few stormy times*** you have walked through, or walked others through. Using the four skills Jesus modeled, assess your responses. Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you remember and use these skills when tough times happen. Also keep in mind the four things we should not do in stormy times.

### **FOUR STORMY-TIME DOS**

1. Engage people to discover meaning in the storm.
2. Discover and use a compelling voice.
3. Act with integrity of purpose.
4. Cultivate adaptive capacity.

### **FOUR STORMY-TIME DON'TS**

1. Reason things through intellectually.
2. Cast blame on an enemy.
3. Look for sin in the camp.
4. Simplify a complex issue by calling it a spiritual attack.



## LESSON 19

# ***Leadership Selection***

---

*"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...they shall all be taught by God. Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me".*

- John 6:44-46

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***One of the greatest*** challenges in leadership is discerning who to invest in. Jesus practiced the principle of leadership selection.

In John 17:8, Jesus said to the Father, "I have given the words you gave me to the men you gave me."

Effective leaders do what Jesus did: they look for those the Father is giving them. In other words, those men or women who are spiritually open and have potential as a teachable disciple. Those are the ones the Father is giving you.

Luke 6:13 says, "And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles." Jesus spent the night before He chose His twelve apostles praying diligently about who He would select.

We are not to judge those who appear to be unteachable or evidence lack of spiritual hunger, but instead look for those who are "facing toward Jesus" with open hearts. This principle is true regarding leadership selection, and also true for the non-Christians we spend time discipling to faith in Jesus.

Why practice selection? Here are several reasons:

- We can't disciple everyone. Everyone needs Jesus, but that should not be confused with God leading us to disciple particular people.
- God is leading us to specific people and wants us to find those people.
- Satan can distract us from the right people by bringing the wrong ones across our path, people who will occupy our time and energy and in the end, who are not sincere.
- God wants to teach us discernment.
- "Insiders" in a business, school, neighborhood, or culture are more effective than outsiders. There are people who will be more effective than you for reaching their sphere of influence. If we disciple those people, they in turn will reach many others.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***My wife, Sally,*** and I spent 20 years reaching out to street people, backpackers, and young people struggling with life-controlling addictions. We ran a rehab program in our home for drug addicts. Through that experience, we learned the vital importance of spending our efforts on the right people. We learned the hard way again and again that some people were "distractors" that kept us from genuinely honest seekers of truth.

It was hard to say no to someone who asked to live with us or join our team, but over time, we saw the wisdom in seeking God's leading for who we should select.

We learned that God's leading to select and invest in a few didn't mean He didn't love the others. It meant that He had someone else for them. We learned to trust God's leading, and in the end, the principle of selection became foundational for training leaders, as well as choosing who we invited into our rehab program.

We also learned how the principle of multiplication goes hand in hand with the principle of selection. Robert Coleman summarized the “marriage” of these two leadership principles: “Jesus was not trying to impress the crowds, but to usher in a Kingdom. This meant He needed trustworthy men who could lead the multitudes, and not be led by them...”<sup>1</sup>

Jesus came to launch a movement. To do that, He needed trustworthy men and women to lead and reproduce the movement.

Jesus needed men and women who could stand on their own, not just be dependent on Him to make all their decisions for them. He didn’t need robots, He needed leaders—men and women who gleaned from Him and then would go on to impart the same DNA in their disciples as well.

Jesus’ disciples would increasingly face attacks from the leaders of the religious establishment. They had to be strong and wise in their own right if they were to withstand those attacks.

The same is true for us that was true in Jesus’ life: the thing that will outlive us and bring us the greatest fulfillment is the “fruit that remains,” that is, those disciples that we have selected and invested our lives in.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

**List** the men and women that the Father has given you to select for discipleship and leadership training. Are there any key leaders you have been missing or neglecting due to an already packed agenda? It may be time to do what Jesus did: get away for a focused time of prayer, then select a few to give greater attention to.



## LESSON 20

# ***The Gift of Rejection***

---

*From that time, many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"*

– John 6:66-67

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***God uses rejection*** to shape our inner world.

Rejection from people is a test from God. When we pass the test of rejection, it creates two character strengths—toughness and tenderness.

Leaders cannot lead in the fear of God without toughness to keep going when people turn away from them. And they cannot lead in Christ-likeness without tenderness if they have not forgiven those who reject them.

Jesus said we are to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Great leaders in the business world, in the home, and in the church are both tough and tender.

Rejection is an important gift in the spiritual development of a leader's life. It is so important, that if we do not bring about our own rejection through bad choices and lack of wisdom, God will bring it about for us, perhaps through the unwarranted actions of others.

Regardless of where it comes from, God uses rejection to shape our character and prepare us to be the men and women He wants us to be.

Has someone important to you rejected or betrayed you? Have you considered the possibility that this is God's doing? God doesn't cause people's wrong choices, but He is not

distant and disengaged either. God is purposely watching over our development as leaders.

Jesus suffered rejection. Should we expect anything less as His followers?

It is helpful to know why Jesus' followers rejected Him by looking deeper into verses 60-71 of John 6. In these verses, we find seven reasons why some of Jesus' followers chose to reject Him (and why some of our disciples may be tempted to reject us).

### SEVEN REASONS JESUS WAS REJECTED BY SOME FOLLOWERS

1. They didn't like His hard sayings.
2. They didn't understand Him.
3. Complaining by some infected the hearts of others.
4. They were offended by Him.
5. Unbelief in His teachings fueled doubts.
6. They were swayed by the opinions of others.
7. Temptations of the devil clouded their judgment.

### LESSON LEARNED

***In the end,*** the reason why people reject us is not nearly as important as how we respond.

I have experienced my share of rejection. We all have. Fallen, broken, human beings reject one another. The pain of rejection goes deep. The lie of rejection is that we have to withdraw from others to protect ourselves.

But God has a different purpose for rejection. He uses it. At times He may even cause it. Does this shock you? Do not be surprised that God will orchestrate painful relationships to test you and teach you invaluable lessons.

Why is rejection a gift from God? I have seen two kinds of fruit from rejection in my life.

## THE FRUIT OF REJECTION

- **TOUGHNESS** – God uses rejection from people turn us to Himself. He uses it to produce godly determination in our character. He teaches us not to fear what people say or do. God needs men and women who will not give up when things are hard, who will not sulk and whine and turn back when others do. God uses human rejection to produce divine desire and determination in our character.
- **TENDERNESS** – If we respond appropriately to those who reject us, two things occur almost simultaneously—we forgive...and we keep going. We learn to forgive as we forge ahead. Toughness without tenderness is rude and uncaring. It is rejection in response to rejection.

One of the greatest pictures of rejection in the Bible resulting in tenderness and toughness is when Joseph forgave his brothers—the very brothers who were jealous of their father’s blessing in his life, plotted to kill him, and sold him into slavery. When Joseph met his brothers again after many years, he was able to forgive them. He then led them without fear or favor, all while maintaining a tender and forgiving spirit. (Gen. 37-50)

## LESSON TO LIVE

***Have you received*** the gift of rejection? Have you considered that it may have been orchestrated by God? Or have you blamed it on people, failing to recognize what God was up to?

Perhaps the gift of rejection in your life took place many years ago. It’s not too late to go back to the point of pain, to forgive, and to take hold once again of God’s purpose in your life. It is never too hard and never too late with God.





## LESSON 21

# ***Leadership Discipline***

---

*Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

- John 6:15

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***A leader is disciplined.*** You can make it to heaven without discipline, but you can't make a positive difference in the world without it. God's grace will get you to heaven, but hard work and time alone with the Father is needed if you are to impact other people's lives.

A leader gets up earlier than others and often goes to bed later. A leader regularly spends time alone with God. If you expect your leaders to be men and women of personal discipline, then you must set the example for them.

The Gospel writers testify to the personal discipline of Jesus. Luke says Jesus withdrew to spend the night alone in prayer before making a major decision. Mark says Jesus arose very early in the morning, while it was still dark, to go to a deserted place to pray. Matthew says that Jesus taught His disciples to find a secret place and pray alone to God.

Jesus used His time wisely to be alone with the Father in prayer. No spiritual leader can be truly effective without carving out daily times of prayer.

### **THREE REASONS TO SPEND QUIET TIME ALONE WITH GOD**

1. **GOD WANTS IT** - One should not take lightly an invitation from the Creator of the universe to be with Him.

2. WE NEED IT – We need the wisdom, forgiveness, power, and spiritual food for our soul that only God can give.
3. OTHERS WAIT FOR IT – They need our prayer. God has chosen to use the prayers of spiritual leaders as a way of partnering with Him to accomplish His purposes in other people's lives. Without prayer, God has chosen to limit what He does.

## LESSON LEARNED

***My Father*** was a praying man. As a young boy, I seldom woke up without hearing my father pray. He would kneel beside his bed and lift his voice in prayer. The bedroom door was closed, but I knew Dad and Mom were praying every morning.

I heard him pray for me and my brother and sister, for church members in need, and for people who didn't know Jesus. Dad was a hard-working man, but he always got up early enough to start his day in prayer.

Developing a habit of early morning prayer is the most important routine of a leader's life. If you are a parent, you may want to follow the example of my friend Jimmy Seibert. As a father of young children, he got up long before his wife and kids, spent time alone with God, then helped get the kids out of bed and dressed for school so his wife, Laura, could have uninterrupted time alone with Jesus.

When people want more of you, when the pressures of life mount, when there is a crisis in your family or business, you can experience God's love and wisdom by getting alone in prayer. Notice in John 6:15, it says when people wanted to make Jesus king, He responded by getting away from the expectations and demands of the people to be alone with *the King*.

Prayer is not about a thing to do, but a person to talk to. It is not about a duty to perform, but being with our closest friend.

The position of our physical body is not what is important in prayer. It is taking time away from people and the busy demands of life to quiet our soul. It is making time to speak and listen to God.

As Briner and Pritchard say, “Prayer and solitude do not cut into a leader’s time or lessen his or her effectiveness; rather, they add to and multiply that effectiveness.”<sup>[1](#)</sup>

The fact that people need us as leaders is good. The fact that they want to make us king to solve their problems is not so good. It affirms our ego, but our followers and family need to know that we put God first. That is why early mornings are the best time of the day to build the discipline of personal prayer. If you need to drink a cup of coffee to wake up, or splash cold water on your face, do so. If necessary, take a walk or talk out loud to stay focused. How you do it is not as important as doing it!

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Take an honest inventory*** of your prayer life: how many times a week do you pray, how long do you pray, and how focused on the Lord are you when you pray?

Decide if you are satisfied with your personal discipline of prayer. If you need to, ask a mature person to mentor you and walk a road of accountability with you to make this the most important part of your daily life.



## LESSON 22

# ***Manage What You Release***

---

*Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these people may eat?"*

*- John 6:5*

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Good leaders*** responsibly manage the people they release. If you ask people to do something, or agree to a request, it is your responsibility to manage this wisely. It is easy to cast a vision, but it is another thing to faithfully supervise people to carry out the vision.

This means we should think carefully about what we ask people to do—they will expect us to support and coach them.

Whether you appoint someone from inside your organization, or recruit someone from outside, you are responsible for your part in what you approve. This doesn't mean micromanaging every detail, but remaining accessible and involved.

This leadership lesson from Jesus should give us pause when we consider starting a new project or approving another person's project. Have you thought through what your responsibilities are to the people who are involved in the endeavor? In the case of Jesus, He allowed the multitude to gather to Him, so He took responsibility to feed them.

There is a difference between being responsible *to* people and being responsible *for* people. As a leader, you should not confuse the two.

To take responsibility *for* people means we get enmeshed in their lives to the point that we feel responsible for their decisions. To be responsible *to* people means we maintain healthy boundaries, recognizing that no matter how needy a person is, how pressing their problems may seem, or how important the project, we are not to interfere with their free will and their responsibilities.

Healthy leaders don't try to be heroes and rescue people. At times, that means allowing people to suffer the consequences of their decisions. It also means we don't allow people to manipulate us to rescue them from the messes they create.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***Visionary leaders*** tend to one of two leadership styles: take charge and direct people, or delegate tasks to someone else and move on, sometimes leaving people feeling abandoned.

One of my greatest failures as a young leader was to move too quickly from directing to delegating. I am a visionary leader. I love initiating new projects and then handing them off to others as quickly as possible. In some cases, I have wounded people by moving on too quickly.

Through the years, I've learned that if I approve a particular project or program, I have a responsibility to follow through with appropriate support and supervision. That doesn't mean I do everything, but that I communicate my expectations, as well as what can be expected of me.

Wise leaders transition smoothly from directing to coaching, from coaching to supporting, and from supporting to delegating.

These four styles of leadership represent four stages of overseeing those who report to us. Self-aware leaders know their natural leadership style, but can adapt to the other

three styles of leading people, depending on the person they supervise and the circumstances.

In Jesus' example, He accepted responsibility for feeding thousands of followers. He could have turned them away, but He was catalyzing a new spiritual movement and wanted them to hear His message. He wanted them with Him and took responsibility to care for them.

What we release, we manage.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Take some time*** to consider the following questions:

- What do you learn from this leadership lesson from Jesus?
- What is your natural leadership style?
- What are your strengths and limitations when it comes to overseeing people?
- Do you maintain healthy boundaries between yourself and others?
- Are you careful to define expectations when it comes to approving new projects?



## LESSON 23

# ***Leaders Speak with Authority***

---

*"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning my doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."*

– John 7:17

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Jesus spoke with authority,*** but He didn't speak on His *own* authority. The Gospel of John mentions several times that Jesus did not speak "on His own authority." (John 7:17, 11:51, 12:49, 14:10)

Jesus had authority within Himself as the Son of God, but in His humanity, He was under the Father's authority. Jesus was sent by the Father on a special mission, and as such, He submitted to the Father's authority.

The source of Jesus' authority can be the source of your authority as well. He spoke with authority because:

- He knew the Scriptures.
- He listened to the Father and obeyed Him.
- He did not use power over people.
- He embodied His message.
- He took years to prepare for His mission.
- He resisted the temptations of the enemy.
- His ministry to people was a lifestyle—whether in His work as a carpenter or in the season of discipling leaders for a new spiritual movement.

Let's look at three types of authority exemplified in Jesus' life.

### THREE TYPES OF AUTHORITY

1. DERIVED AUTHORITY - Jesus' authority came from His being. Spiritual authority was the sum total of who Jesus was as a person: His character, wisdom, and the wise and timely exercise of His spiritual gifts.
2. DELEGATED AUTHORITY - Jesus was sent on a mission by the Father. Hebrews 3:1 says He was the apostle and high priest of our faith. As an apostle, He was a messenger. He was under authority. No leader can exercise authority if he or she is not *under* authority.
3. DISTRIBUTED AUTHORITY - Jesus did not keep His authority to Himself. He shared it with those He disciplined. Jesus said, "As the Father sent me, so I send you," (John 20:21), and He "gave to His disciples authority..." (Luke 9:1 and Matt. 10:1) If we give away authority, we gain authority. If we try to keep it all to ourselves, we lose our authority.

Jesus said, "There are rulers who lord over people...they try to exercise authority over people...." (Matt. 20:25, paraphrase) Those who think in terms of being "over" people, miss the truth of what Jesus taught in these verses. Leaders should not aim to be *over* those they lead, but *for* them. If you serve people, you influence them, and if you influence them, you have authority in their lives. Authority is not taken from people, it is *offered* to people.

Jesus did not rely on a position to gain spiritual authority. There is a time and place to define positions and responsibilities, but that is not the central nature of spiritual authority. Jesus did not come under the auspices of an institutional church or religious organization to acquire



authority. He had no official title. Yet, in spite of these “limitations,” He exercised great authority. How is that?

The way He fulfilled His ministry was the key. Jesus demonstrated to His disciples, and to us today, that we don’t need a position or recognition from a religious institution to exercise spiritual authority. Jesus came to give birth to His church as a spiritual family, a movement of servant leaders who follow His example. Those who obey His commands are promised His authority. (Matt. 28:18-20)

As important as it was for Jesus to understand the truth He spoke about, it was more important for Him to *be* what He was talking about. Spiritual authority flows from being, not knowing or doing.

Jesus was the true revolutionary. He started a movement that changed the world and never once even hinted that the leaders of His movement needed positions, titles, degrees, or formal education.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***Leaders*** who are secure in Christ, who know their true identity, will attract followers. It is only to the degree that you fulfill your calling in life in the same spirit as Jesus, that you will be a man or woman of true authority.

I have served in many positions in my life. I have been a pastor, elder, church planter, entrepreneur, CEO, board member, and director. I have learned that to the degree I asked to have authority or took authority over people, I lost authority.

To be clear, I have asked for clarity of responsibility, and have not regretted doing that. I have sought definition from what others expected of me, and have been very happy I did that as well. But doing those things is different than seeking authority over people. Remember, authority is primarily derived from inside ourselves, not granted to us from the outside.

When I was a young leader of a group working on a project in the West Indies, there was a team member that was a constant source of irritation to me. I concluded that I needed to establish “my authority.” I sat him down and pulled out his plane ticket, then put it in front of him and said something like, “Okay. I am the leader here, and either you shape up or I am going to ship you out. Your choice.”

Many years later, we laughed together about the experience, but I am not proud of that moment. I played the “authority card.” And when you do that, you should know you are in trouble. It is important in times of conflict to know who has the final say in things, but that is not the point in this lesson. The point is—what is your first response when it comes to authority? Do you rely on your position to influence and guide people’s behavior? Or do you rely on God and focus on building relationships?

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***How have you tried*** to acquire authority in a way that has backfired on you? Take a few minutes to write a few paragraphs on your view of biblical authority from Jesus’ teachings on the subject, then turn that into a prayer of commitment to be a person who exercises godly authority and servant leadership.

Spiritual authority in people’s lives is like money: invest it wisely and it comes back to you, but waste it and it is gone. If you try to use authority to gain control or push your point of view, you will ultimately lose it.



## LESSON 24

# ***Two Anointings***

---

*And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world".*

– John 8:23

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***John 8*** depicts the difference between two kinds of “anointings”. There is a showdown between Jesus and the Pharisees. It is a drama acted out between two types of leadership: the leadership of the servant King of the Kingdom of God, and the leadership of the kingdom of shrewd men of the world. Though the Pharisees were religious leaders, Jesus declares their leadership is not spiritual, but worldly, saying, “You are from beneath, I am from above.”

We learn a vital leadership lesson from this chapter: the exercise of leadership will either happen in the power of the Holy Spirit or in the power of human energy. There is a strictly human type of leadership, and a Spirit-led type of leadership.

Your vocation does not determine if your leadership is spiritual or worldly. Rather, your values and character make this determination—whether you lead in the power of your human energy or the power of the Holy Spirit. These two leadership anointings are contrasted in John 8.

**LEADERSHIP ANOINTING COMPARISON – JESUS VS. PHARISEES**

VERSES	ISSUE	JESUS	PHARISEES
1–12	Sin	Forgive	Condemn
1–12	People	Develop	Demand
13–30	Truth	Defend truth	Deny truth
21–30	Power	Serve people	Leverage power
31–36	Conflict	Confront	Control
37–47	Rights	Self-sacrifice	Sacrifice others
48–59	Identity	Inner peace	Performance

True anointing, as described in the Bible, is God working through people. In the Old Testament, those anointed by God for special service had oil poured on them as a symbol of His Spirit empowering them for their assignment. Anointing involves both selection and empowerment to fulfill the call.

Both Saul and David were anointed with oil to symbolize their appointment to be king. But there was a difference in the anointing of these two kings.

Saul was anointed with oil from a man-made flask (1 Sam. 10:1), representing that it was the people who chose Saul, not God. David, however, was anointed with oil from a natural container, the horn of an animal, signifying that David was God's choice to lead the people. The actions, character, and motivations of these two kings clearly illustrate different anointings.

## BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF TRUE ANOINTING

- **JOSEPH IN EGYPT** – To gain influence with people, worldly anointing seeks traction through political maneuvering and behind-the-scenes deal making, whereas God's anointing grows by loving and serving people wisely. This is possible even if you are serving in an ungodly institution.

- DANIEL IN BABYLON – To exude personal confidence, worldly anointing works through outsmarting others, while spiritual anointing exhibits dependence on God for self-confidence, wisdom, and favor with people.
- ESTHER IN PERSIA – To acquire authority and power, worldly anointing comes from claiming your rights and defending your position, whereas true anointing is the result of faithfulness and humility.
- DAVID WITH HIS MIGHTY MEN – To grow an organization, worldly anointing pushes and drives people to perform and produce, but the anointing of God’s Spirit manifests itself by developing people.
- PAUL – To be successful, worldly anointing must overcome the competition, but true anointing comes through obeying the Lord and relying on His wisdom.
- BARNABAS – To demonstrate leadership, worldly anointing aims to be the boss, but the nature of Spirit-led anointing is to be an encouraging and empowering father or mother to those you lead.

## LESSON LEARNED

***When I experience*** inner turmoil as a leader, I usually find myself torn between operating under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, or operating in a self-driven, worldly anointing of personal ambition.

God gave me my personality, my abilities, and my spiritual gifts. He has put ambitions for His Kingdom in my heart. I want to influence God’s people for His purposes. Over time, I have discovered that my personality can be led by the Spirit or driven by the flesh, and that my spiritual gifts can function in natural enthusiasm or godly spirituality.

Fortunately, God has given me a godly wife, great friends, and spiritual mentors who have confronted me when

needed. Years back, one friend said, “You’re quite political, did you know that? You seem very concerned about your position and title.” That hurt. But it needed to be said.

At one point as a young leader, I came to the sad realization that I was more like Saul than David. To be free, I had to be brutally honest with myself. When I repented and chose the anointing of the Spirit, I experienced tremendous freedom. It has been a lifetime of growth, but today, I joyfully seek the anointing of God’s Spirit, rather than gratifying my flesh.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Ask one or two*** mature and forthright friends to help you assess your leadership anointing.

Sometimes self-assessment is not enough. We need others who love us to speak the truth to us—to affirm us, but also to help us see where we fall short. If your personality overwhelms people, you may be operating in a fleshly anointing. If you fear others will receive the credit for a job well done, it may indicate that your anointing is worldly. If you are threatened by other leaders, it could indicate you are not secure in who you are.



## LESSON 25

# ***Unresolvable Conflicts***

---

*This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.*

—John 8:6

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***In the life of Jesus,*** conflict often arose due to the Pharisees' pride, jealousy, and indignation. Jesus' opponents were easily offended and determined to find fault. When this type of conflict occurs, it may not be possible for a leader to resolve the conflict amicably—not without a major change of heart from others and, if necessary, from oneself.

Many conflicts result from personality differences, leadership styles, and incongruous values. It is worth the effort to work through those conflicts because they are a way of God refining our character and growing our capacity to love others wisely.

It is hard to accept a conflict as unresolvable, but once we prayerfully come to that realization, it allows us to work through our part of it without unnecessary guilt or pressure. You don't have to "make it happen." Paul and Barnabas never fully resolved their conflict over John Mark. The Bible does not justify the conflict, neither does it condemn either Paul or Barnabas.

How should we respond to a seemingly unresolvable conflict?

### **TEN RESPONSES TO CONFLICT**

1. Be secure in yourself. Jesus maintained a peaceful demeanor. When you are in turmoil, go back to God.
2. Don't react emotionally. Stay prayerful and practice the fruit of the Spirit. If you go on the warpath to attack others or defend yourself, no good will come of it.
3. When you do respond, be concise and straightforward. Don't offer explanations—you don't owe them to people accusing you in the wrong spirit.
4. Don't draw attention to yourself. You are not the issue, even though others may target you or attack you. It may be an issue of incompatible vision or incongruent values, but don't make yourself the issue.
5. If given the opportunity, and you feel a release to do so, describe the issue clearly as you understand it. But only do this because you are led to speak about the topic calmly and in respectful manner.
6. Ask for a decision or response. It is not wrong to set a time frame for dealing with the issue. To drag it out may lead to an ongoing, unhealthy debate. Ask God to bring it to a head so everyone can move on with their lives.
7. Ask people outside the situation to provide objective feedback. When faced with a conflict, I sought out unbiased, respected leaders to help me objectively assess myself and my responses. They offered affirmation, as well as feedback on my attitudes and actions. I also asked a trusted advisor to fly in and spend the day doing an "emotional and spiritual" audit on my heart. He asked very probing questions that I spent months reflecting on.
8. Trust God to defend you. God may test you and allow you to be falsely accused, but someday the truth will come out. Keep your eyes on the Lord and be more concerned with what God thinks of you than what people think or say.



9. Make up your mind to speak well of others. It is true—what we sow, we reap. This is not only true of sinful actions and words, but it is also true if we speak well of others we disagree with.
10. Take time for your heart to be healed before you move into the next season. If you don't, you might carry with you unresolved pain and bitterness toward others. This doesn't have to mean waiting years for God to heal your heart. It could be as simple as winning the battle of forgiveness and laying down your rights—no matter how painful it may be—then moving on.

## LESSON TO LEARN

***While pastoring*** in the States, I inherited a church situation mingled with both spiritual passion and relational pain. It was a beautiful group of people, but there were unresolved issues below the surface. Looking back, I was overconfident about my ability to lead the people out of their pain while casting a new vision.

On more than one occasion, people I hardly knew admitted they didn't trust me. Riding in a car one day, one of the staff members said offhandedly, "I am watching you to decide if I will trust you." There were prophecies and predictions of my failure even before I arrived. Not a small leadership challenge by any stretch of the imagination!

There were many people in the church that loved and honored Sally and me. To this day, we have great affection for the church. However, there was a serious degree of division amongst the people. There was a lack of agreement about the future vision of the church and about the role of the senior leader. One of my great regrets is that I was not able to lead the congregation to emotional health.

It was a very painful season for me and for Sally. Though I tried to respond in the right spirit, more than once, I said

things that were defensive and unwise. I wish I could go back and erase some of the things I did and said.

In the end, I came to realize that I could not have changed the raw, emotionally charged atmosphere I inherited. Sadly, some of the relationship conflicts I had with members of the staff in the church went unresolved. Because of our value differences, they most likely will never be fully resolved until we reach heaven.

Eventually, we were forced to step down as senior pastors of the church. The church was divided and hundreds of people left feeling wounded and confused. It was a very intense time of pain for everyone.

After we left, those who remained with the church began a rebuilding process. Thankfully, the members who hung in there helped reconstruct a vibrant local church.

As I reflect back on what God wanted me to learn from the “unresolvable conflict,” one thing is clear above everything else: God wanted to do a deeper work in me. God didn’t cause the problems we inherited, but He used them. He used them to provide an opportunity for me to come to a new place of humility and security in Him. And I learned how essential it is for leaders to build on the same foundation of relationship values and ministry vision as the people they hope to lead.

God taught my wife and me to release any sense of entitlement regarding apologies or restored relationships. We needed to release people and lay down our “rights.”

In spite of that painful situation, a new church planting movement, All Nations, took on life and gained momentum during those difficult days. Though relationships were tested, we lost none of our partners in that movement, even through the split. Today, more than a thousand churches have been planted and multiplied through All Nations. We’ve reached every continent and many closed countries. Out of death came resurrection, and out of pain, God brought great joy.

Sally and I have come to a place of deep gratitude to God for allowing us to go through the conflict. We went through the death of a vision, but God used it to bring about a new beginning.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***What lessons*** from John 8 are applicable to conflicts you have gone through? Consider these questions in light of Jesus' example:

- When conflict happens, how should you respond?
- What types of conflict have you regularly experienced through the years? What does God want you to learn from those experiences?
- What types of conflicts are unresolvable?
- How should you respond in the midst of the conflict?
- It is crucial to examine your motives if you do not want to resolve certain types of conflict. What reasons for not resolving conflict do you think are acceptable to the Lord?



## LESSON 26

# ***The Power of a Rebuke***

---

*And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."*

– John 9:2–3

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

**Jesus** uses the incident of healing a blind man to correct His disciples' religious paradigm regarding the cause of sickness and suffering. He firmly rebukes them. Their view, like that of the Pharisees (John 9:34), was that tragedy and illness were results of sin.

As we've already seen, Jesus taught His disciples that truth sets people free (John 8:31–32)—not just free from sin, but free from false religious paradigms.

The Bible has much to say about the power of a rebuke:

- God rebukes those He loves. (Rev. 3:19)
- Paul instructs Titus to rebuke erring believers that they may be sound in their faith. (Tit. 1:13)
- Timothy is taught to rebuke those who persist in sin. (1 Tim. 5:20)
- Jesus teaches it is better to rebuke a brother who sins against you than to remain silent. (Luke 17:3)
- God warns us that if we disdain a rebuke He will laugh at our calamity. (Prov. 1:25)
- We are taught to rebuke a wise man but not a scoffer. (Prov. 13:1)

There are times when a sharp rebuke given in love is a necessary and fruitful leadership tool. It is better to be rebuked in love than to be left to figure out things on your own.

Rebukes can go two ways. Woe to the proud leader who freely gives rebuke but refuses to take a rebuke offered in love. Very few people will venture to speak up a second time to a leader who resists correction.

Jesus was sometimes exasperated with His disciples and let them know He was disappointed in them. On more than one occasion, He corrected false thinking, immature actions, and selfish ambitions.

John 9:1-12 provides an example of a teachable moment in the lives of the disciples, brought about by a rebuke. We might easily read over these verses about the man born blind and miss the lesson. Jesus not only healed a blind man, but also dealt with a prevalent false teaching in the minds of His disciples. This same false teaching is prevalent in our world today: people aren't healed because they don't have enough faith.

Effective leaders use rebukes, especially stinging rebukes, sparingly and strategically. They don't use a rebuke to tear down others or to defend themselves, but rather, to build up and restore.

Wise leaders wait for the right moment, give a stern rebuke, then move on. Thoughtless leaders keep repeating their concerns endlessly and do it with unnecessary harshness. Rebukes should be given in patience, after much prayer, and they should be as painful for the leader as the one being rebuked. We should pray that people's hearts are ready to receive a rebuke before we give it.

Briner and Pritchard say this about leadership rebuke:

Timing is everything—both in giving compliments and criticisms. Jesus didn't hesitate to challenge His followers when He felt they weren't paying enough attention to

what He was saying and doing. But He always did it in a way that preserved their dignity even while driving the painful point home.<sup>1</sup>

They point out that Jesus didn't rebuke His disciples for what they didn't know, but rather what they *should have* known. Jesus had been pouring into His disciples a new way of thinking, the way of the Kingdom, and the way of grace versus works.

The disciples were with Jesus when He ate on the Sabbath and when He spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well. They had witnessed Jesus forgiving a woman caught in the act of adultery. So when they thoughtlessly perpetuated the false teaching that illness is caused by sin and unbelief, in spite of all they'd seen and been taught, Jesus rebuked them.

It doesn't do any good to chastise a person for something you have failed to explain to them. Or to rebuke them for something they know they should do, and want to do, but are struggling to do. That person needs encouragement, not rebuke.

Jesus didn't make the mistake of rebuking fools, but instead those who had the capacity to understand but needed correction—in this case, the wise men He had chosen as His disciples. His rebukes were for their good and for the health of His movement. Jesus models for us that a carefully chosen rebuke at the right time is a leadership skill that will yield good fruit, a skill you would be wise not to neglect.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***I was rebuked*** once by a homeless man. He believed he was a prophet and his role was to set preachers straight. I was leading a missions organization and a new church plant

in Holland at the time. He sat in our Sunday service, then came to me after the meeting to offer his rebuke.

Our leaders had regularly interacted with this man and concluded that he believed many things that were unbiblical. His appearance was an added challenge: he hadn't showered in months. His body odor was palpable. His attitude was arrogant. His fingernails were long, with layers of dirt caked underneath. "You were unloving when you said that about people, you know," he said.

My first reaction was not good. I wanted to toss him out or call the police. But I felt something stirring in my spirit. I knew I had to take it from him. Even worse, he asked for validation, wanting me to admit that, because he was right in this rebuke, he indeed was a prophet sent from God.

It was hard to take, but God taught me if I would stay humble, I could learn from even the lowliest person. The "prophet" was false but his words of rebuke to me in that situation were true.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***To give rebuke*** you must be willing to receive it as well. Have you made it known to your mentors that you want to be corrected? Have you gone on record with God and others that you will welcome a timely rebuke?

Consider teaching on the principles of giving and receiving correction to help prepare those you lead in the area of mutual accountability and input. As you teach, go on record with them that you are willing to be corrected as well.



## LESSON 27

# ***Power Distance***

---

*His parents said what they did because they feared their leaders, for the Pharisees had agreed already that if anyone confessed that Jesus was Christ, he would be excommunicated.*

– John 9:22 (paraphrase)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***“Don’t let*** the people get too close to you—and never, never let them call you by your first name. If you do, they will lose respect for you.”

That is the old school approach to leadership: keep your distance. Stay aloof from the people. The leader makes the decisions and the people follow. The shepherd is ordained to lead, and the sheep are supposed to listen and obey.

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day had that approach to leadership; they expected unquestioning allegiance to their authority. They didn’t hesitate to demonstrate their rank. Their attitude communicated a clear message: “We are in charge around here.”

The Pharisees thought subordinates couldn’t understand profound spiritual truths, so they did not trust the people they led with important responsibilities. Their relationships to ordinary people were not close or personal.

But Jesus had a different approach. He associated with people. He lived with them, ministered side by side with them. He trusted His disciples with important assignments. He did not issue blame to those who suffered illness or experienced tragedy. He socialized with the disciples as friends. He encouraged questions and initiative. He saw



everyone as having equal value—not equal authority or responsibility—but certainly equal value.

Still today, leaders tend to fall into one of two paradigms of power: they either expect people to keep their distance, or they value close association with those they lead.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***I was raised*** with a denominational, hierarchical model of leadership, but later adopted a different model when my wife and I began reaching out to backpackers and street people. We realized that Jesus' friendship approach was easier for them to receive. It became increasingly apparent to us that this was the style of leadership that Jesus modeled and we had come to believe in.

Sally and I invited young people to live in our home for more than three decades.<sup>1</sup> Hundreds of those young people came to faith in Christ and many of them went on to become leaders in schools, businesses, and churches around the world.

People from many different cultures and countries lived with us—from Frenchmen to Filipinos, from Australians to Austrians, from Brazilians to Bengalis. What a smorgasbord of cultures! And with each culture, came different expectations, especially regarding leadership and authority.

The distance people expect between their leaders and themselves is sometimes referred to as “power distance.” It is the extent to which hierarchy exists between leaders and followers in a given culture.

Though we learned to respect cultural differences, we also believed then, and still believe today, that the Bible has a lot to say about Kingdom values that trump our earthly cultures. We believe it is vital to “read the culture” we relate to, but there is a Kingdom culture that is the measuring line for all human cultures.

In cases where there is low power distance, leaders and subordinates have egalitarian relationships, with access to near-equal levels of power. The Dutch are known worldwide for having very low power distance. Recruiters seek them out for their strength in collaboration and driving consensus on multicultural teams. These traits are common among Dutch managers because they practice consensus decision-making on a daily basis. Managers do not make decisions, they lead teams to make them.

When leading a ministry in Holland, we discovered (the hard way) that spiritual leaders are routinely challenged on nearly every decision. Even our children, who attended Dutch schools, were not taught to respect authority, but to challenge it!

Today, everyone lives in a “global village.” Even the smallest towns in rural areas are a mix of different races and cultures. Our grandchildren live in the US, but attend school with children from India, Afghanistan, Iraq, Mexico—and their experience is not unique. Parents, school teachers, business owners, and church leaders should take the time to understand the dynamic differences of the cultures they interact with.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***One challenge*** for leaders who practice the leadership principles of Jesus is to be culturally sensitive to people they lead. To serve most effectively, we must bridge cultural gaps while leading with clear vision and maintaining the standards of leadership we believe in.

Understanding power distance can inform how a leader handles perceived inequalities among people. People from cultures exhibiting a high degree of power distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place, and inequalities need no further explanation. In cultures with low power distance, people strive to equalize the distribution of

power, and demand justification for inequalities with their leaders.

Jesus broke through the power distance paradigm by expecting consecration from His followers, but at the same time offering personal friendship—something the leaders of the Pharisees could not imagine doing.

In cross-cultural situations with both low and high power distance, Jesus modeled both the holiness of God and intimate friendship with God. Ultimately, it is His example we are to follow, not the dictates of one culture over another.

Leaders who use intimidation or superiority to subtly create fear in their followers (and have no sense of the wrongness of this approach) need to go through a “values conversion.” They need to submit the wrong values of their unredeemed culture to the biblical paradigm of servant leadership.

What values of leadership have you absorbed from your culture or upbringing that might need to be changed?



## LESSON 28

# ***Spiritual Thievery***

---

*"If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he's up to no good...sheep stealers, every one of them."*

- John 10:1,10:8 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Jesus called Himself*** the Good Shepherd, as opposed to those who are "hirelings." A hireling is motivated by money, power, or simply an unhealthy desire to draw people to themselves. A hireling, Jesus teaches, does not have the best interest of the people at heart.

A hireling is often a born leader, but lacks integrity. They woo people to themselves and their interests. They draw people away from an existing vision or leadership by subtly creating the impression that they are more caring, more dedicated, more this, or more that.

Hirelings employ false flattery: "No one understands me like you do. You are not like the others around here." They play on people's hurts or fears. Instead of encouraging loyalty to the existing organization and encouraging people to work through disappointments in a straightforward and trusting manner, they use discord to their personal advantage. They pretend to truly care, when in reality they are simply trying to build their own following.

Jesus had sharp words of rebuke for those who cause division, divide loyalties, and steal the hearts of the sheep: A hired man is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to him. He sees a wolf come and runs for it,

leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. He's only in it for the money. The sheep don't matter to him. (John 10:12-13, The Message)

True shepherds must watch for those who draw people away from the values and vision of the organization. It is better to deal directly and firmly with such people. Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus to watch out for: "...wolves among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw the disciples away after themselves." (Acts 20:29-30)

In John 10, Jesus contrasts true and false shepherds.

#### GOOD SHEPHERDS:

- Enter by the door, honoring the existing structure/leaders (verse 2)
- Call their sheep by name (verses 2-3)
- Lead their sheep out (verses 2-3)
- Go before their sheep to show them the way (verse 4)
- Serve as gatekeepers for their flock (verses 7-8)
- Are life-giving to their sheep (verse 10)
- Give their life for their sheep (verse 11)
- Know the condition of their sheep (verses 15 and 27)
- Unify their flock (verse 16)
- Serve their sheep because of the Father's love (verse 17)
- Keep their sheep safe (verse 28)

#### BAD SHEPHERDS (HIRELINGS):

- Enter without going through the shepherd or gate (verse 1)
- Don't hesitate to steal sheep (verse 1)

- Are strangers to the vision, values, and leaders (verses 2-5)
- Bring deception, death, destruction, and division (verse 10)
- Are motivated by money (verse 12)
- Flee in times of trouble (verse 13)
- Don't care if the sheep are scattered or divided (verse 13)
- Don't sacrifice their lives for the unity, health, and love of the sheep (verse 15)

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***A few years back,*** I discipled a group of young African leaders. They started a small church in a poor community called Masiphumelele. It wasn't long before a "spiritual thief" appeared on the scene. He was an older man who presented himself as an experienced Bible teacher and pastor.

The leaders approached me one day to express their concern about this man. He was paying a lot of attention to young women in the church. His teaching was causing division among the members of the church. And he was wooing people away to his own new church plant.

Rather than telling the young leaders to immediately expel the troublemaker, I asked them to study the Bible for a few days and then come back to me with passages of Scripture that would give them clarity and guide their response.

They studied the Bible diligently and returned with a clear understanding of their responsibility. They referred to John 10 and other passages of Scripture. They were prepared to confront the man, but being young in the faith, they wanted confirmation that they were on the right track. It was no

small thing for them as younger leaders to confront an older man. But they did so and the man left. The church grew because of it.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***In Acts 20,*** Paul charges the Ephesian elders to guard the flock they shepherd. How can true shepherds guard their flock without becoming controlling or mistrusting? List positive ways to be watchful and caring shepherds based on the principles Jesus teaches in John 10.



## LESSON 29

# ***Those Who Grieve Well, Grow Well***

---

*Mary came to where Jesus was waiting and fell at His feet, saying, "Master, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within Him.*

- John 11:32-34 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***There is a strange*** and disquieting relationship between grieving and spirituality. Jesus understood this relationship but did not ignore it or try to remove it from the lives of Mary and Martha when their brother, Lazarus, died.

Grief is the result of loss. We grieve the loss of loved ones, health, friendship. We grieve missed opportunities. Hearts are pierced by miscarriage, job loss, home foreclosure, and divorce. People move away, leaving a familiar house, friends, and family behind.

Different temperaments and life stories cause people to handle loss differently. What may be catastrophic for one person may be insignificant for another. For instance, when a disgruntled person leaves a church or business, the loss affects people in strikingly different ways. Some grieve deeply and others are able to move on quickly.

Jesus modeled grieving for us by how He faced the loss of His close friend Lazarus—with deep emotion and honest anguish: "When Jesus saw Mary sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within Him." (John 11:33-34, The Message)



Jesus gave us another example in how He grieved over people and places. The Bible refers to Jesus as the “man of sorrows.” (Isaiah 53:3)

In his book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, Peter Scazzero imagines Jesus responding in the following inappropriate ways:

- At the tomb of Lazarus, what if Jesus had not wept but told people to “Stop all the moaning and get a grip.”?
- What if His prayer over Jerusalem had gone like this: “You turned away from God. It’s too bad. I’m moving on without you.”?
- On the cross, instead of crying out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” what if Jesus had shouted out over the crowd, “God is great! Praise Him!”?<sup>1</sup>

Emotionally healthy leaders embrace loss as a way to grow closer to God. Mature leaders have learned, like Jesus, not to ignore loss in their lives or the lives of those they lead.

Healthy leaders know how to grieve well—and how to serve others as they grieve. They work through their grief with God in prayer, and they shepherd others with understanding when a follower experiences loss.

## LESSON LEARNED

***A vibrant,*** newly married couple joined our ministry as staff members several years back. Tragically, the husband died of an accidental overdose of medicine shortly after they arrived. Our church community was traumatized by the loss.

It was a new experience for me, so I called a friend, a seasoned spiritual leader, for counsel on how to help our community process the loss. She respected the relationship between grief and spiritual growth. She understood the importance of leading a spiritual family in processing grief

properly. This is particularly consequential when the loss impacts an entire community of people.

The goal of processing grief is not to understand the reasons for loss, but to receive God's comfort in the midst of loss. She coached me to watch out for four responses to loss that would circumvent the comfort God wants to provide when we grieve well.

#### FOUR COMMON RESPONSES TO AVOID

1. Blame it on the devil – over-spiritualize the loss.
2. Look for sin in the camp – try to find whose fault it is.
3. Rationalize it – a head-level response.
4. Ignore it and pretend it didn't happen – a form of denial.

When we gathered our community to discuss our friend's death, all four of these responses surfaced. Fortunately, I was prepared to guide our people through the grieving process.

Some leaders treat loss as an interruption, an obstacle to getting on with life. These leaders tend to see grieving over a significant loss as a waste of time. "Just get over it," they say to themselves—and others.

Other leaders fear loss of control when it comes to grieving. They are embarrassed by tears and afraid to allow themselves to feel their own sadness, depression, or anger.

As I have grown older, I've learned to pay attention to my heart and to process my grief with God honestly—something I was not encouraged to do in the church I grew up in.

I have learned not to hide from my losses nor pack them away like old pictures stored in dusty boxes in the attic. I have learned the hard way that past losses can negatively impact present relationships if not dealt with before God and with others.

#### **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Until Jesus returns,*** loss will be a part of life. According to Scazzero, “In Scripture, the God-like response is neither a spin nor a cover-up...Scripture commands us to pay attention.”<sup>2</sup>

As leaders, we have the privilege of guiding people to grieve their losses well. A wise leader creates space for their followers to “pay attention.”

#### FOUR STEPS FOR HEALTHY GRIEVING

1. Pay attention to your heart, acknowledging the pain, loss, anger, and sadness.
2. Don't rush the time between sorrow and healing.
3. Use the Psalms to give a biblical language to your grieving.
4. Allow (when ready) the old to give birth to the new.

Take a moment now to pay attention to your heart. Are there any undealt-with losses lurking there? Have you taught your followers how to pray the Psalms as a way of dealing with loss? Is there something new God wants to bring from an old loss in your life?



## LESSON 30

# ***Cultivate Loyalty, Confront Disloyalty***

---

*But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"*

– John 12:4-5

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Judas*** was not the only follower of Jesus to betray Him. Peter denied Him. Thomas doubted Him. And many others quit Him.

From the struggling disciple's point of view, there were "good" reasons to be disloyal to Jesus. He lacked the backing of the political and religious establishment. He was an outsider. He defied the expectations of people.

Instead of leading a popular uprising, gathering an army, and overthrowing the Romans, Jesus came among them as a servant to establish a spiritual Kingdom.

Jesus made outrageous claims to divinity, yet also predicted His own suffering and death. He asked His disciples to follow in His suffering. He spoke to them plainly about self-denial and losing their own lives. (John 12:25)

As great leaders often do, Jesus cast a big vision for impacting vast numbers of people—every ethnic and cultural people group of the world in fact. Perhaps the vision of reaching the whole world felt like a delusional dream to the disciples?

Jesus promised those who stayed with Him would receive a reward. But as great leaders also do, He painted a clear

picture of the cost to serve in His Kingdom: servants to the point of death. (John 12:23–25)

For Jesus, loyalty and unity were leadership absolutes. No leader can build a movement and sustain momentum while tolerating disloyalty. Loyalty is something a leader should expect. Without it, there is no true leader/follower relationship.

If leaders are to cultivate true loyalty among followers, they must be clear about what loyalty is not. Let's look at Jesus' example:

- Jesus did not expect His disciples to be naive or misled regarding His humanity. How did the disciples know Jesus was tested in the wilderness and tempted to turn back from the cross? He told them. His transparency won their affection and trust.

Likewise, as leaders we should not hide our weaknesses or temptations. Loyalty flourishes best when followers are fully aware of their leader's weaknesses. In his very insightful book, *Loyalty*, author and Bible teacher Bob Sorge says, "Loyalty is not the domain of the gullible who can't perceive a leader's shortcomings."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes leaders blow it. People sometimes move on from following earthly leaders for valid reasons. Either way, a secure leader will bless those who move on.

Leaders have learning curves. They grow in wisdom from making mistakes and learning from them. Loyal followers don't expect their leaders to be perfect. They follow their leaders because they respect the deposit of God's Spirit in their lives.

- Jesus did not teach His disciples unqualified allegiance. He modeled a loyalty to the Father that superseded allegiance to people. Loyalty to people is never unconditional or unqualified. Godly loyalty is not

mindless adherence. As Sorge puts it, “Loyalty does not get a lobotomy.”<sup>2</sup>

If there are excessive expressions of loyalty to earthly leaders, it should not be “blind loyalty.” Loyalty is not blind. Loyal people think for themselves. They don’t kiss their brains goodbye. Some leaders demand loyalty based on their position alone. But that is not the loyalty Jesus asks of His church. Loyalty among God’s people is not unquestioning, but full of wisdom and discernment—and sometimes expressed in respectful disagreement.

- Jesus did not expect silent acquiescence. He did not gather a group of “yes men” to be His disciples. He encouraged their questions and taught them to think for themselves. He did not force-feed them spiritual truths, but guided them to Spirit-led self-discovery from the Scriptures.

Some church leaders hold the view that asking questions is a form of rebellion. Jesus did not label His followers disloyal when they voiced their concerns and struggles with His decisions or teachings. Loyalty is not silent agreement. A secure leader should take questions as a compliment. It shows that followers are engaged.

How does a leader who expects followers to pay a great price cultivate loyalty? One way is to create an atmosphere of openness that encourages dialog and discussion, to welcome honest feedback.

When leaders don’t allow disagreement or open discussion, they are exercising control, not leadership. Jesus repeatedly invited His disciples’ questions. They openly discussed His parables and freely asked Him about certain leadership decisions.

However, when discussions go beyond discussion and tip toward disloyalty, a wise leader will not allow it to go

unchallenged. Jesus spoke openly to His disciples when one of them betrayed Him. (Matt. 20:18, 26:20-25)

A leader should be able to rely on the loyalty of co-workers. Without loyalty, division and rebellion will take over. After warning a disloyal person, such a person should be expelled if they don't repent. That may seem harsh, but it is actually a form of love to ask that of one's subordinates.

Disloyalty can take root when questions and disagreements are not openly asked and discussed, but instead raised in private meetings or with outsiders.

This is the kind of disloyalty Paul warned about when he wrote to Titus, "Warn a quarrelsome person once or twice, but then be done with him. It's obvious that such a person is out of line, rebellious against God. By persisting in divisiveness he cuts himself off." (Titus 3:10, The Message)

When a follower denigrates the leader or organization outside of the group, he is no longer a follower and should be treated as a dissenter.

Loyalty and commitment are two different things. It is possible to be committed to the church or movement or business you are part of, without being loyal to the leader over you. Commitment has to do with faithfulness in fulfilling one's duties, whereas loyalty has to do with love. Commitment has to do with performance, loyalty has to do with trust.

To be a faithful team member, one needs to be both committed and loyal. What many leaders do not realize is that you can demand commitment to the cause, but you have to earn loyalty from the heart.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***I am grateful*** for the patient responses to my questions when I was an emerging leader in Youth With A Mission. Founder Loren Cunningham gave me the freedom to

express my concerns and ask questions during leadership meetings.

At times, I was also gently rebuked when I asked questions with far too much energy and emotion—deservedly so. I had to learn the difference between asking impulsive questions versus trusting my leader to hear me and respond at the appropriate time.

By observing Loren, I learned that he required commitment but promoted loyalty. That is, he expected everyone to be committed to the responsibilities of leadership, but promoted leaders based on loyalty.

I have come across other Christian leaders who not only required commitment, but also demanded loyalty. Those leaders often used loyalty to manipulate people. It was actually a smokescreen to hide their insecurities.

Below are some lessons I have learned about loyalty—both in my association with leaders I admire and those I do not.

## FIVE LOYALTY LESSONS

1. Loyalty is best nurtured in our hearts when it is given to individuals, rather than institutions. Loyalty to leaders will produce the fruit of group loyalty.
2. Disloyalty violates a bond of trust with a leader that God has put over us.
3. Disloyalty to a person closes our heart to receive teaching, correction, or personal input from that person.
4. False loyalty is based on needing approval from our leaders rather than finding our approval from God.
5. Rewards for loyalty include:
  - We enjoy the overflow blessings of God's anointing on our leader's life.
  - Loyal people are a privilege and pleasure to lead.



- Loyalty survives times of relational testing and ministry trials.
- God rewards loyalty with ministry posterity.
- Loyalty increases effectiveness.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Here*** are some questions for personal reflection:

- Are you as loyal to your followers as you expect them to be to you?
- What spiritual leaders have won your loyalty? Tell others about them and how they earned your loyalty.
- What is the difference between loyalty and commitment?
- Is there someone who has been disloyal that you need to confront?
- Have you expressed appreciation to those who have been loyal to you?



## LESSON 31

# ***Becoming a Leader— The Secret of Adaptive Humility***

---

*Jesus knew that the Father had put Him in complete charge of everything....  
So He got up from the supper table, set aside His robe, and put on an  
apron. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the  
disciples...*

– John 13:3–17 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***John 13-17*** encapsulates Jesus' teaching to His disciples regarding leadership. This happens on the last night He spends with them before dying on the cross.

Jesus not only speaks about leadership, but models the greatest lesson of all for them by washing their feet. This is one of the clearest illustrations of servant leadership in Scripture. By His example, Jesus taught His disciples that they could become leaders if they, too, modeled servanthood. To serve is to lead—this is not a mere test we must pass in order to take up the role of a leader, but the heart of leadership itself.

Notice the contrast: “Jesus knew the Father had put Him in complete charge of everything....” (verse 3) Fully knowing His status, power, and authority, Jesus lays those things aside to take up the task of a slave—washing dirty feet after a day's journey. Service, not status or position, is the primary characteristic of Jesus' leadership.

Becoming a true leader in God's Kingdom often requires unlearning what it means to be a leader in the normal, worldly sense.

In John 13, Jesus models how to train leaders—not through a classroom lecture, but by laying down rights. He had the right to be worshipped as God. But Jesus laid aside His divine prerogative to illustrate a central means of influence to those He discipled: express what you have in your hands at the moment. Meet the need of the hour. Don't worry about recognition or status. Serve.

The more informal the means of developing leaders, the more consequential the impact. The leaders we train are not nearly as impacted by our ideas as they are by our practical examples of servanthood.

Jesus modeled a leadership style of “adaptive humility.” He observed a common situation: there was no one to wash the disciples' dust-covered feet. He adapted His response to meet the need at hand by taking on the role normally reserved for the lowliest servant. In doing so, He showed them how a humble mindset would enable them to adapt and learn from their circumstances, how they could become masters of their circumstances, not be mastered by them.

Peter learned this lesson quickly. After initially rejecting Jesus' attempts to wash his feet, he immediately repented: “Master! Not only my feet, then. Wash my hands! Wash my head!” (John 13:9)

When we use our God-given abilities to serve others, no matter how simple the task, the promises of God are opened up to us as leaders in His upside-down Kingdom. Therein lies the crucial lesson: no one becomes a leader in Jesus' Kingdom without practicing adaptive humility.

Jesus operated on the assumption that leaders are able to express themselves humbly. That is why He confronted Peter's proud refusal to allow Him to wash his feet.

Jesus looks for men and women who so desperately want to become all they are created to be that they will go to any

lengths to wash the feet of others. Desperate humility produces servant leadership.

Becoming a leader isn't easy, but it is simple. It's a lot easier than most of us think. Each of us—each human being, no matter how broken—contains the capacity for servant leadership.

Most of us can point to some life-altering experience that unlocked our awareness of the power of adaptive humility. God regularly offers every human being opportunities to lay down their “rights” or position for others. No matter how simple the situation, Jesus uses everyday life lessons to imprint us with the DNA of servant leadership.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***A very simple thing*** once made an indelible impression on me. Living in a small Holland village, I remember walking down a long hallway in the training center I led. It was very early in the morning so I had the building all to myself for prayer and meditation.

As I paced up and down the hallway, I noticed a candy wrapper thrown carelessly on the floor. I thought to myself, “I must say something to the students about being so thoughtless.”

Back and forth I walked, repeatedly passing the wrapper. Praying. Seeking God. Annoyed with the students. Then I heard a still small voice: “You pick up the candy wrapper.”

I protested, “But if I start using my quiet times in the mornings to pick up candy wrappers, where will it end?”

Through the hallway window, I could see a few other randomly scattered bits and pieces of paper around the campus. I pictured myself marching from one end of the campus to the other, using my precious time to pick up scraps of paper all day.

But the voice persisted. “You pick it up and don’t lecture the students about it. Just do it and carry on.”

And so I learned “The Lesson of the Candy Wrapper.” Just do it. Don’t call attention to yourself. Don’t consider any task too lowly for you to do. Don’t fancy yourself too busy to pick up candy wrappers. Desperate humility produces servant leadership.

A Jesus-kind-of-leader doesn’t set out to become a leader or prove his leadership, but rather, that person is willing to express what is in them to meet the need of the moment. There is a huge difference between performing to become a leader and simply offering what skills or abilities we have. It is the difference between being driven by pride (or insecurity) and servanthood.

Servant leaders continue to grow throughout their lives. They embark on a lifetime of becoming. There’s no smirk on the face of a humble, Jesus-style leader, but that “look” is all too common for superficial, wanna-be leaders.

What you do find on the face of servant leaders is a hungry look of determination to keep on learning from every person they meet and every circumstance they experience.

To reprise Warren Bennis in *On Becoming a Leader*, emerging leaders who are graced by adaptive humility exhibit the following qualities:[1](#)

- They quickly discover a guiding vision for life. From an early age, Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela were both guided by a consuming vision. Humility releases vision. We see a need, we offer the abilities we have to meet the need, and we are launched on a journey of discovery.
- They develop enduring passion. They love life. They are guided by hope. They refuse to be daunted by lesser men who give up easily. It is a passion that endures—not a short-lived enthusiasm.

- They cultivate persistence. They stick with their vision, no matter what obstacles they encounter. Many would-be leaders fall by the wayside because of a lack of emotional resilience.
- They grow in integrity. Integrity means they press past their insecurities, their baser human desires, to put the Kingdom first. Integrity for the servant leader means they know themselves, they have a true and secure identity. They are not driven to perform or prove themselves. They are not occupied with being happy, but with being wholly devoted to Jesus.
- They are daring. Servant leaders are adventurous. They dare to take risks. Do crazy things. Long to live on the edge. They embrace errors as part of learning. Mature leaders know there are no errors or failures for those who remain humble and learn from their experiences. Daring servant leaders fall forward.
- They stoke the fires of curiosity. They don't allow boredom to distract them from a probing curiosity. Yet they don't jump from topic to topic, but explore one thing long enough to master it.

These are the basic ingredients for becoming a leader. Some are born with these traits, for others they are less innate, but all leaders must work to cultivate them. Leaders push through the invisible wall of leadership lethargy. They learn. They grow. They become.

Bennis writes about leaders who are once-born and leaders who are twice-born. Once-born leaders transition from home and family in a relatively easy manner. They have no crisis to overcome.

Twice-born leaders usually suffer growing up and are often left alone to overcome difficult circumstances, so they develop an elaborate inner life.

Twice-born leaders make the most of difficulties in life. As they grow older, they become independent. They think for themselves. They analyze problems and develop inner resources to overcome them. Leaders who are twice-born, Bennis says, are inner-directed, self-assured, and as a result, are passionate and inspirational to others.<sup>2</sup>

Every one of us has the potential to be twice-born leaders. If we face the challenges of life, draw on the resources of God's grace in our inner lives, and push through to live lives of adaptive humility, we each have the capacity to become a Jesus-kind-of-leader.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***What was the turning point*** for you in learning adaptive humility? Take a few moments to reflect on how you have become a twice-born leader. If you are not one of those leaders, what challenges are you facing that could be God's invitation to become that type of leader?



## LESSON 32

# ***Jesus Now***

---

*"The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing."*

- John 14:12 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***The world of the disciples*** was about to be shattered. Jesus knew the events that were to transpire in the next 72 hours, but the disciples had no idea. Jesus foresaw what was to happen to them, but that is not what troubled Him the most.

He saw the greater problem in the upper room that night: after three years of instruction and intimacy, Jesus' disciples did not truly know Him.

Jesus knew they wouldn't fully know Him until He left and ascended into heaven. And so, knowing He would return in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised His disciples the divine mentor, the comforter, was coming to help them.

The disciples didn't believe it was true—just as some followers of Jesus don't believe it is true today. Tragically, spiritual leaders often don't believe it as well.

What was it that Jesus knew and the disciples did not? The disciple John had been right there with Jesus, but did not understand, believe, and eventually write about this truth in his Gospel, until after Jesus ascended into heaven. What Jesus knew, and John came to know, was that Jesus continues to be present with us through the Holy Spirit.



Contrary to what many people think, it would not have been better for us to live in the time of Christ. We would not have known Jesus better if we had met Him in His earthly body. It seems logical to think this way, perhaps, but spiritual truths often do not align with human logic.

You can only fully know Jesus through the Holy Spirit's powerful, indwelling presence. That is why Jesus made this astounding promise: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." (John 14:12)

The Holy Spirit is not a divine energy. He is not a force. He is the third person of the Trinity, sent to the church after Jesus ascended into heaven. We can know Jesus deeper and wider and higher now, through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. We can know Jesus more intimately than if we walked and talked with Him physically, like the disciples did.

In *Encounters With Jesus*, Timothy Keller says, "Right here and now, through the Holy Spirit, you can see Christ and know His presence and His love better than the apostles could in that moment in the upper room."<sup>1</sup>

Are you living as if this is true? Do you—as a leader in your home, at work, and in the church—see the magnitude of what is being offered to you in the person and presence of the Holy Spirit?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell details about the last supper, but it is John who has the greatest revelation. John meditated on the great truths Jesus shared that last night with His disciples. He remembered and reflected on those words spoken in the upper room for many years after the other disciples were martyred and gone. And he brings these truths to light in John 14. The Holy Spirit makes the presence of Jesus real to us now—more so than when He was walking the earth in His physical body.

John understood the church can continue to live and love like Jesus. This is why he wrote these words: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” (1 John 2:6)

John captured Jesus’ expectation that the church would continue to abide, to walk, to love, to do mighty works, to enjoy intimacy with Him. John remembered Jesus telling him, “I am with you and you will walk with me and live like me!”

John believed the church would change the world. He wrote this message to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. He exhorts the churches to step up, to take hold of, and to “be Jesus” to the watching world. John believed all of Jesus is made available to us, in every circumstance of life, through the Holy Spirit—right now.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***The role of today’s leaders*** is to do what Jesus did in John 14—to point people to the ongoing presence of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through His abiding presence and power, we encourage, enable, inspire, challenge, and model the life of Jesus to others.

This is the heart of Jesus-style leadership. We can break the leadership of Jesus down into simple functions, but we will be guilty of a simplistic reductionism if we don’t believe in the abiding presence of Jesus powerfully ministering in and through us—now.

In my journey as a leader, I have discovered many empowering functions of Jesus’ leadership. If I ask for them and receive them by faith, like Jesus I can:

- Comfort people’s hearts
- Challenge people’s paradigms
- Model the way for people to live
- Enable people to act

- Inspire a shared vision

When we do these things, we're not mimicking slick leadership tricks learned from a management book. It is Jesus Himself ministering through us, by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We may follow the actions and examples of Jesus when we serve others, but we're not merely imitating Him—Jesus Himself ministers through us. We partner with Jesus, preparing the way for the Holy Spirit to advocate for people in the courtroom of their hearts. If we try to do the work of the Holy Spirit, our followers will hear us and not Him. So literally, we prepare the way—and then get out of the way—so the Holy Spirit can speak to people.

Sally and I once spent time with some very precious friends and co-workers who were facing a seemingly impossible set of circumstances. I tried giving advice. I did my best to advocate for what I believed were the right things to do for them to overcome their circumstances.

But it didn't minister life to them. So I did what I am advocating to you in these pages: I got out of the way and let the Holy Spirit do His thing.

How did I do that? I affirmed all they had been doing, their great faith and courage. I listened to and cared for them from the heart. We celebrated their victories thus far. I encouraged them to list their options going forward. And then we did what we all wanted to do: we cried out to God in prayer. We asked our Father to speak. And we listened and shared what God was saying. I was careful to listen to what *they* heard God saying and affirmed them.

God reminded us that He has a plan for them. He is not absent. He is testing and teaching them and will use the fiery trial of their faith to bring about great good.

So when I stopped advising and made room for Jesus to speak in that moment, through the Holy Spirit, to comfort and guide—He did.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***Keller says*** one way to take hold of this great truth of “Jesus now” is to imagine you are a billionaire, and you have three \$10 bills in your pocket (or three R100 or £5 notes). Let’s say you walk into a grocery store, pay for \$8 of food, but later you discover you dropped those other two bills, and now you can’t find them. How will you react? Will you become frantic about the lost money? Will you spend hours looking for it? Will you demand the police call in the FBI? Start a manhunt?<sup>2</sup>

No. You are a billionaire! You have money enough. You don’t need to spend precious time and energy fretting about those two bills.

Now, apply the truth: someone has criticized your leadership in the last few days. A close friend has betrayed your trust. A business deal fell through at the last minute—one you were counting on.

What will you do as a follower of Jesus who knows the presence and reality of Jesus now? Will you shake your fist at God and accuse Him of abandoning you? Will you take offense and become bitter and resentful? Lose sleep at night as you lie awake worrying?

No! You are a spiritual billionaire. Jesus is with you. You can go for a walk and talk it through with Him. You can process your deepest feelings and fears.

You will work it through with Jesus because you have an advocate in the Holy Spirit. He is on a mission to speak truth deep into your spirit, reminding you that the riches of God’s grace are at your disposal.

If you react with panic, anger, accusation, blame, withdrawal, or lack of self-control, your problem is not self-control or lack of self-esteem. Those are symptoms of the deeper issue: that you have lost touch with Jesus. You have turned away from Jesus inside you.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to draw you back to the riches of Jesus in you and with you, as you do your part of taking hold of God's grace and riches—now—in the abiding person and presence of Jesus.



## LESSON 33

# ***Values-Based Leadership***

---

*“Abide in me, and I in you...This is my commandment, that you love one another...You will bear witness to me.”*

– John 15:4, 15:12, 15:27

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Through the years,*** I have observed scores of vision and value statements—some in hotel elevators, many in corporate offices.

I once saw a garish set of values listed on tall banners that draped from a church sanctuary. Some of the value sets I have seen through the years were very impressive. Others were pretty hokey.

The biggest challenge is not writing down our values, but living them and imparting them to others in a way that’s easy to understand, articulate, and pass on.

This is especially important for leaders of churches that are more missional and less institutional. Leaders who lead like Jesus do not rely on the authority of their position, but their ability to define, convey, and ingrain a clear set of core values.

Values shape and define the character of a group of people. Values determine how people relate to one another, how they make decisions, how they choose the things they do together, and why they live the way they do.

Leading like Jesus means we lead from the heart, from a deeply embedded set of inner passions that are imparted to us by Jesus Himself. If we are to lead like Jesus, we will treat people like Jesus treated them.

The Bible says, “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45) In another place it says, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7) Our values reflect who we are in our hearts. Deeper than our behavior, deeper than our culture, deeper than our doctrines and church rules, lie our values. God has designed us in such way, that at the core of our being, we have deeply held “inner beliefs.”

Values are inherited from our families and our cultures, yes—but they can also be chosen. Values don’t just have to happen to us. We can choose an aspirational value that is modeled in Jesus’ life, and then we can cultivate and nurture that value until it manifests in our lives.

Core values are the most vital part of a group’s culture as well—the very thread that makes up its community fabric. It is what drives and defines our behavior, and ultimately, the character of a group. Vision determines what a group does together, but the values of Jesus (if they are embraced by the group) determine why and how the group works toward the vision. They do it like Jesus. Everything comes back to that one compelling desire: Jesus.

#### TEN THINGS CORE VALUES DO

1. Communicate what is essential about a group
2. Allow positive change without loss of direction
3. Influence behavior
4. Inspire loyalty
5. Validate good leadership
6. Shape group character
7. Define and determine the vision
8. Determine corporate distinction
9. Guide the risks that will be taken
10. Dictate personal involvement

## LESSON LEARNED

**When** I was with Youth With A Mission, I served on a team that wrote down 21 foundational values for the movement. Very few people, besides the founders, could remember all 21 values. Later, that list was reduced to 18 values—but I have yet to meet a YWAMer who can remember all 18 values. They are all biblical and good, but the list is too long.

Later, I pastored a church in Kansas City. In order to help people remember our seven core values, we even made them into an acrostic (PROMISE). I started several pastoral staff meetings by asking what our seven core values were. Even the pastors were confused and couldn't remember what our values were!

Through the years, I have given a lot of thought to the “core of the core” values that apply to every leader who leads like Jesus. I've concluded all effective Jesus-style leadership comes back to three core values, the very three that Jesus emphasized to His disciples the last night He was with them before the crucifixion.

I have seen the same three core values written in different formats and using different terminology. That is not important. Here's what counts: have we absorbed them from Jesus? Are we absolutely certain we will give our lives for them? Do we hold them so dearly they are non-negotiable, no matter the circumstance?

Below are the three core values Jesus passed on to His disciples in John 15. Take time to measure your life, and the lives of those you lead, by these core values.

### THE THREE LOVES – JESUS' THREE CORE VALUES

1. TO LOVE GOD – Jesus said, “Abide in me.” Abiding is about a quality of relationship with Jesus. One outworking of “abiding” is time spent alone with Jesus.



Setting a measurable standard gives substance to this core of all core values. Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”

If this core value is highly regarded in our lives, we won’t mind being held accountable about the actual quantity and quality of the time we spend with Him. All of us who are serious about leading like Jesus should be able to commit to a minimum amount of time we spend with Him.

Simply put, there can be no real abiding and no lasting fruit in our lives if we don’t spend time with Jesus, connecting to His heart. Setting a goal of quality and quantity time we spend with Jesus is not legalism, it is accountability.

2. TO LOVE THE WORLD – Jesus told His disciples, “When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father...He will testify of me. And you also will bear witness...”

The Holy Spirit in us cannot and will not be silent about Jesus. He will bear witness to Jesus. If you and I are submitted to the Holy Spirit, we will bear witness by our lives and by our words of the Good News of Jesus.

People sometimes have difficulty sharing their faith with non-Christians because:

- They don’t pray for non-Christians on an intentional and regular basis—prayer provides inner motivation and desire when we connect with God’s heart for lost people.
- They don’t know how to start spiritual conversations about Jesus—not a program or formula, but a relational way of engaging people in intentional spiritual conversations.

- They don't know how to respond to people if they are spiritually open—how to follow through in intentional discipling.

As leaders, we have the opportunity to be storytellers, to inspire our followers. My friends Dougal and Frans are awesome story-tellers. Dougal is engaging the surfing tribe in our area, and Frans engages everyone he meets. Their stories of doing church with non-Christians, of engaging people in spiritual conversations, spur me on and keep me going. In turn, the people I lead tell me regularly that my stories of connection inspire them.

I define discipleship as starting “intentional relationships” with people who don't know Jesus. Not just *intentional*—that can turn people into targets, objects for our evangelism cause. And not just *relationships* that can end up going nowhere—hanging out for the sake of it, waiting for some mystical vibe to be able to talk about Jesus.

We need both aspects, the intentional relationship, because that is how Jesus lived life. He disciplined people intentionally, but also loved them personally and with great respect.

3. TO LOVE EACH OTHER – Jesus taught His disciples to love each other. He made it clear: the fruit of abiding is loving others in our spiritual family, a lifestyle of caring and discipling one another.

There are many expressions of love for each other as believers, but for All Nations, the family of churches that I help lead, it means three things:

- Becoming part of a spiritual family, a local church community, where you are committed and accountable.
- Being part of a small group of Jesus followers—a small group that lives out the three core values as an authentic lifestyle.

- Engaging in discipling relationships with a minimum of three people—one person who is discipling you, at least one non-Christian you are discipling, and one fellow Christian you are investing your life in.

## LESSON TO LIVE

**To quote** Jimmy Seibert in *Passion and Purpose*, when we speak about our core values, they need to be “...intentional, practical, and reproducible. God never gives us truths just to think about. He gives us truths to follow because it’s in our best interest and it’s how the world is changed.”<sup>[1](#)</sup>

Take some time right now to measure your obedience in regard to these three “core of the core” values for leading like Jesus:

- Are you spending quality time with Jesus daily?
- Are you building intentional relationships with non-Christians?
- Are you discipling others to grow spiritually?



## LESSON 34

# ***Leading for Change***

---

*That stirred up a hornet's nest of questions among the disciples: "What's He talking about: 'In a day or so you're not going to see me, but then in another day or so you will see me'? And, 'Because I'm on my way to the Father'? What is this 'day or so'? We don't know what He's talking about." Jesus knew they were dying to ask Him what He meant.*

– John 16:17-19 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Change was coming.*** Jesus could see it and the disciples could not. A wise leader sees a crisis before it happens and prepares his followers for it. Jesus acted like He was in charge. He *was* in charge. His Kingdom was coming and it was in conflict with the Roman kingdom, the Jewish kingdom—and all other kingdoms since that time.

Jesus prepared His disciples for the massive change His Kingdom was bringing about. He was “leading for change.” Likewise, leading like Jesus is leading for change, following the model summarized by John 13-17:

- Change in leadership style from institutional to relational (John 13)
- Change of God's presence from temple to people (John 14)
- Change in spirituality from outward to inward (John 15)
- Change in warfare from physical to spiritual (John 16)
- Change of prayer from cursing to blessing (John 17)

### **LESSON LEARNED**

***I have been part*** of major change several times in my life: from taking a leadership role in a missions organization to leading a local church, from following another leader to founding a movement, and from being a founder to becoming a successor.

In studying the life of Jesus—the greatest leader of change in human history, I have noted His practices for leading change and adapted them to my own life:

- Jesus established a sense of urgency. No one is motivated to deal with change unless they believe it is going to happen soon and will impact them deeply. Jesus told the disciples there would be major disruption to their lives very soon. John 16 illustrates how Jesus did this.

When handing over the leadership of All Nations to my successor in Cape Town, I was intentional about giving the reasons for succession: my age, the need for another set of skills, and the new phase of growth we were entering. This helped create a sense of personal urgency about the need for new leadership.

- Jesus created a guiding coalition to lead the change process. He assembled a core group of leaders and gave them the tools and credibility they needed to lead the revolution. Every deliberate change process requires a team that can lead in wisdom and humility. In John 13, Jesus demonstrated the style of leadership He was introducing.

All through my life, I have pioneered new churches and ministries. In each one, I have quickly moved from single person leadership to team leadership, usually within the first two to three years.

- Jesus clearly communicated His vision for change. He focused on the “why” more than the “how.” He developed the primary strategies for achieving the change: following

the three “loves” or core values found in John 15 (worship, mission, and community). And He used every means and occasion possible to sow the seeds of those three Kingdom values. In John 21, He taught the disciples and the multitudes that there was a higher way (love) and a more inclusive audience (all the peoples of the earth, not just the Jewish people).

When I was appointed as the pastor of a congregation in Kansas City, we made a significant change in the vision of the church. This shift in vision was to a more outward focus on reaching out to our neighbors and going to the nations. I focused on the reason for the change: it was what Jesus did. My motto for the change was simple: “Passion for Jesus means we are passionate for those He died for.” I explained in many different ways that the closer we get to Jesus in intimacy, the more we will be passionate for the things He is passionate about.

- Jesus empowered broad-based, grassroots action for change. He came to turn the priesthood on its head by making every believer a priest. He strove to eliminate structural obstacles that inhibited change by introducing new ways of functioning as the people of God—removing the priestly hierarchy and introducing the power of the church by meeting in homes, in small groups that included women and children. Jesus bypassed the Old Testament hierarchical systems that would undermine the New Covenant. He poured out His Spirit on all flesh—Gentile and Jew, male and female, Roman and pagan—all who surrendered to His Lordship.

Many years ago, Sally and I were led to start halfway houses for dropouts and drug addicts. Because of a lack of volunteers, we asked the new believers to be our staff workers. What began as a desperate attempt to find help, turned into a conviction: show young Christians you believe in them, give them the opportunity to put their

faith in action, and they will amaze you with their wisdom and ability.

- Jesus generated short-term wins by performing miracles to demonstrate the long-term change He was bringing about. He planned for and “created” visible improvements in people’s lives to give them a taste of what it would be like when the Kingdom fully came. (John 14-16)

As leaders, we model the change for people. If we want disciple makers, we first make disciples ourselves, then share our disciple-making stories with others. If we want unity, we demonstrate love for people who are hard to get along with. Our actions and attitudes as leaders give people a taste of what is to come.

I have learned to use questions and stories to help spread a vision for change. And I have learned it is a huge help to invite speakers and storytellers who share the same vision. (I am also careful to avoid giving the platform to those who don’t share the same values and vision.)

- Jesus built the church on the shoulders of fast adapters, being careful to prepare them through personal discipling, teaching them that love and grace carry the Kingdom forward.

In every transition to a new season, there are fast adapters, slow adapters, and change resisters. I have learned not to worry about the slow adapters—most will adapt and follow in time. And I have learned the hard way not to give in to the change resisters.

- Jesus birthed the church on earth to carry out change. The church is the hope of the world—now! It is the ongoing presence of God throughout the earth. The church itself is not the Kingdom of God, but rather, the change agent of the Kingdom. We can offer a taste of the future through His church in the present. (John 17)

I learned from my father to brag on the church at large, to speak of her good points, and also to speak well of her various expressions through local churches. I enjoy telling the stories of other churches, not just those of our own movement. If members of our movement are attracted to other congregations, I bless them and encourage them. By bragging on others, I help create an atmosphere of hope, healing, and courage. I love the church—every part of it.

As the black maid, Abileen Clark, said to the lonely little girl, Mae Mobley, in the movie, *The Help*, “You is kind. You is smart. You is important.”<sup>1</sup> We can never say it too much! Tell the church how great she is and she will believe you and act like it.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***In our modern*** environment where technology developments, economic uncertainty, and political upheaval seem constant, change has become normal. We can treat change as an enemy or a friend. Here are a few things to ponder as you assess your skills at leading change:

- What do you do to create stability for your people as you lead them in change?
- What specific ways do you prepare those you lead for change?
- How do those actions relate to the change principles modeled by Jesus?
- Read John 13–17 and make a list of specific instances where you see Jesus leading His disciples in change. Then ask what you can apply to your family, work, or church situation from Jesus’ example of leading change.





## LESSON 35

# ***Alignment***

---

*"The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind...that they might be one heart and mind with us."*

- John 17:21 (The Message)

### LESSON FROM JESUS

***Alignment*** occurs when moving parts are in a straight line or in the appropriate relationship to each other.

Leadership alignment takes place when people's hearts and minds are in sync with the vision and values of their leader.

Pastor and author Andy Stanley describes alignment in the world of automobiles. He says the combination of different relative positions of the wheel and tire working together efficiently is called alignment. In order for a car to roll forward smoothly, and to steer easily and predictably, the right parts must be aligned properly. When the front end of a car is out of alignment, it means the parts engineered and assembled to work together are actually working against each other.

Stanley says, "If this situation is not corrected, misalignment can result in the need for major repairs and can even cause a breakdown."<sup>[1](#)</sup>

Just as a car can be out of alignment, a business or church team can also be misaligned. The importance of alignment is highlighted by Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Jesus prays for alignment in these ways:

- He prays for His heart to be in alignment with the Father. (verses 1-5)

- He prays for His disciples to be in alignment with the Father and with each other. (verses 6–19)
- He prays for all believers to be in alignment with glory of God to the world. (verses 20–26)

## LESSON LEARNED

***Once, I was driving*** a borrowed car and noticed it pulling to one side. When I took my hands off the wheel for even a moment, the car would veer off in the wrong direction. It was out of alignment. I was sure to tell the owner because neglecting even a slight misalignment can lead to serious problems down the road.

I have led churches and leadership teams where the same thing has occurred. When I was away for even a few days, or didn't pay attention to what people were doing, they were more apt to pull away from the group.

People get out of alignment just like cars do. A car gets out of alignment in one of two ways: normal wear and tear, or a bad jolt. These same catalysts can cause a team or church to get out of sync with each other and the vision God has given them. Alignment problems are normal for a church or organization. It is okay for them to happen. It is not okay to ignore them.

It makes no difference how well you have cast a vision or how deeply you have imparted values, it is normal over time for a team member or two to work themselves out of alignment with where God is taking you. Instead of working with the rest of the team, they start pulling ever so slightly in a different direction.

Worse yet, some on your team may develop a competing vision or draw on contending values. Consequently, they end up pulling against you. When a team loses its alignment with you as the leader, the members also end up pulling against each other. It is very distracting. It takes more energy to work well together, which wears on team

members. The longer you ignore the situation, the more costly it becomes.

Several years back we had a team member who was out of alignment. He was a good man, worked hard, but always seemed to be half a step out of alignment with everyone else. No amount of gentle persuasion helped. Finally, I asked for an appointment. When we met I affirmed him, told him the things I appreciated about him, and then offered to help him leave our church and start his own ministry.

He was shocked and dismayed. "Why would you say such a thing?" he asked.

"Because you are pulling away from the rest of the team," I answered.

I explained that I would bless him, help him, and wanted to see him succeed, but he could not continue on this way. It was time for alignment with the team, or time to launch his own ministry. He declared his loyalty but it wasn't long until he left. And when he did, all of the team breathed a sigh of relief.

A fellow leader told me about a similar instance. He described his team as rowers in a boat pulling the oars together, but one guy was rowing out of sync with the others, trying to pull the boat in a slightly different direction. He worked hard, but it was very disconcerting to the other rowers. Everyone noticed except the guy rowing according to his own rhythm.

Over time, people get distracted. It is normal for team members to get caught up in the cares of life. But when they lose attention, they lose passion and focus as well. It is understandable, but not acceptable. You cannot accomplish what God has called you to with a team of people who have lost their focus.

I have found that it is not only the cares of life that cause people to get out of alignment, but it also happens as the result of an unexpected emergency. It could be a slump in

sales at the office, a death in the family, a relationship conflict, or a crisis at home.

Regardless, it is important not to be crisis oriented. The crisis must be addressed, but you cannot allow it to be the ongoing focus. You cannot allow the pursuit of your vision to be replaced by crisis management.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***How did Jesus*** deal with alignment? He prayed. And He chose the cross. He aligned His heart with the Father through surrendering in prayer, and then He prayed His disciples into alignment. Jesus knew He was going to the cross. He chose the pathway of sacrifice to achieve the goal of unity of heart and mind.

There is no true alignment without embracing death to our own rights. The journey to glory goes via the cross.

In John 17:9, Jesus acknowledges that the disciples belong to the Father. Giving our disciples back to the Father is necessary to remember who is really in charge.

My father used to say, “Son, never deal with problems of disunity until you pray people’s hearts ready to receive correction. God will do most of the work of unity if you do the work of prayer.”

Today, pray the prayer of ultimate alignment, the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Take time to pray His words verse by verse, inserting your name or the name of your team, family, or disciples. Choose the way of death to self to see the ultimate glory of God. Then, get up from your knees and go forward to live your dream in the power of Jesus’ resurrection.



## LESSON 36

# ***Betrayal, Denial, Abandonment***

---

*Judas betrayed Him...Peter denied Him...The crowd forsook Him...*  
- John 18 and 19

### LESSON FROM JESUS

***If you have not*** yet learned from experience, you will eventually discover that leaders:

- Are easy targets to criticize
- Attract unwarranted skepticism
- Cannot satisfy every expectation
- Initiate change (which makes people feel insecure)
- Experience betrayal, denial, and abandonment

Peter denied Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus. The crowds quit Him. If it happened to Jesus, it will happen to you. Defining the common trials of leadership can help prepare us for them, or at least not be caught off guard when they surface.

### THREE LEADERSHIP TRIALS

1. BETRAYAL - *unfaithful, duplicitous, to help the enemy, to reveal secrets.* Judas betrayed Jesus to His enemies. We can be betrayed by followers or team members when they pass on things shared in confidence.
2. DENIAL - *to disavow, rebuff, break relationship, not acknowledge.* Peter denied that he even knew Jesus. If

followers or team members deny allegiance with us, they are refusing to give proper credit to our leadership. It reflects either rebellion or deep-seeded insecurity.

3. QUITTING/ABANDONMENT – *give up, turn back, desert, walk out*. The crowds abandoned Jesus for Barabbas. Some followers or team members can be fickle or grow restless, especially if the going gets tough. It's common for people to look for greener (or simply newer) pastures.

John, who describes himself in chapter 18 as “the other disciple,” was an up-close and personal witness of the event when Jesus’ followers and admirers turned back on the day of His greatest trial. John relays what Jesus went through in chapters 18–19. As you take time to read these two chapters, consider the reality of going through what Jesus experienced as His closest friends and followers betrayed, denied, and abandoned Him.

Jesus’ hour had come. But the height of His earthly leadership soon became His darkest hour. Why did His followers and admirers treat Jesus this way? Here are two things about Jesus as leader that triggered the reactions of Peter, Judas, and the crowds:

## TWO CATALYSTS THAT TRIGGER REACTION

1. CHANGE – Jesus didn’t come to improve a dying religion, He came to change it. He came to replace it. Jesus was the ultimate change agent.

Leaders, by nature, are change catalysts. But when you attempt to bring about change, you challenge people’s security. People grow accustomed to the way things are. They find their identity in how things are done, so change is very personal. Consequently, it is common for negative emotions, sometimes very hateful emotions, to be unleashed against the one bringing about change. One

pastor friend in the States received death threats for leading his church out of legalism into grace.

Leadership is about the future, not the past. Leaders act as a bridge to a new way. The very people who help guide others to the future are often the ones crucified for doing so.

2. CHALLENGE – Leaders are sometimes betrayed and abandoned because of the costly implications of what they ask of their followers. The new vision might require a lifestyle adjustment or a change in the follower's character. To follow a leader is a very spiritual endeavor. And spiritual endeavors mean personal growth. There can be no growth without digging deep in one's soul to face the barriers of greed, fear, performance, insecurity, and blame.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***I have served God*** with my wife for 50 years in four parts of the world. We have led pioneering teams in Afghanistan, built a movement in the inner city of Amsterdam, planted churches in Asia, and built a church comprised of church planters in Africa.

Throughout these many years, I have experienced personal betrayal by some we thought were close friends, co-workers quitting on us when things got hard, and some of our dearest disciples turning their backs on Jesus, and consequently, on us. I have learned from such experiences. I have discovered that God is always greater than the most difficult of circumstances or most bitter of disappointments. I have learned, in all things, God is at work for my good and His glory.

When we lived in Amsterdam, Corrie ten Boom, the Dutch granny who went to a concentration camp for sheltering Jews in World War II, told Sally and me her story of

witnessing her sister beaten to death, her family betrayed by neighbors, and the promises of God tested in her life to the extreme. In spite of all that, she experienced God at work in every trying circumstance. God doesn't cause betrayal, denial, or abandonment, but He works in it for our good.

Regardless of what is driving your critics, your attackers, your betrayers, or those who abandon you, if you let them get to you, your passion will burn out. You have to allow God to grow resilience in you in these terrible moments. You must forgive, bless, surrender afresh to Jesus, then move forward. The way forward involves death to self, but in exchange, we receive new life from Jesus. His life in exchange for your death.

If your dream as a leader dies out, part of you dies as well. I have seen quite a few people turn back during my years of serving Jesus as a leader. Some have left Sally and me completely on our own in the mission. Others have betrayed our confidences and confessions. None of those who did so said outright that they were quitting or betraying us, but that's what it amounted to.

Most people who turn back justify their compromise. They claim God told them. Promises are broken and commitments can be easily abandoned in the name of God. Whether betrayal, denial, and abandonment come in the form of a direct statement or packaged with an elusive excuse, being betrayed or abandoned can be devastating. It feels the same.

I have learned to grow from this it when it happens. The question I gain most from, is to ask God, "What do you want to teach me through this?" and then I allow Him to shape my character and understanding. In some cases, to be very honest, circumstances support the point of view of those who betrayed or abandoned us, meaning I have made mistakes or hurt someone. But I have learned not to internalize their actions or my weaknesses to the point of



giving up. I have to allow criticisms and attacks to be for my growth, no matter how it is packaged or what causes it.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***How should you respond?*** You should respond to denial, betrayal, and being abandoned by others like Jesus did. It doesn't matter whether you are a leader in your home, school, government, business, or church. You may feel what has happened to you has nothing to do with anything spiritual. But it *is* spiritual because God cares about all of life and He cares about what happens to you—no matter your profession.

Consequently, when your leadership influence is in danger of being snuffed out by the response of others, your heavenly Father is interested. It concerns Him. Your response to betrayal, denial, and abandonment is a spiritual matter. God is willing and able to get involved in your life and help you cope and respond as He wants you to.

I urge you to follow the example of Jesus from John 18–19, whether in the home, the office, or at school. Jesus did four things in response to what happened to Him.

### **HOW TO RESPOND – THE FOUR PS**

1. PERSEVERANCE – Jesus stayed true to Himself. (18:8)
2. PEACE – Jesus forgave His enemies. (18:11, 36)
3. PRAYER – Jesus entrusted His life into God's hands. (19:11)
4. PURPOSE – Jesus completed the mission the Father gave Him. (19:30)

Is there any unfinished business between you and God regarding betrayal, denial, or abandonment? If so, take time to pray through John 18–19. To God alone, name those who you feel have done you wrong.

Open to your heart to God. Your Father cares how you are doing and wants to be with you as you respond. Ask for His help. Confess your disappointment. Don't try to be strong on your own. Let Him be your strength.



## LESSON 37

# ***The Price of Leadership***

---

*Jesus said, "You haven't a shred of authority over me except what has been given you from heaven."*

- John 19:11 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***There is a price to pay*** when you lead people. There are great rewards as well, but leadership comes with a cost. The value you place on leading others is revealed by how much you are willing to sacrifice to be the leader God wants you to be.

John 18–19 records the price Jesus paid for leadership:

- He was abandoned and betrayed by friends. (18:2, 18:17)
- He was tortured and beaten. (19:1)
- He was mocked. (19:3)
- He lost His reputation. (19:5)
- He was rejected and scorned. (19:6)
- He was falsely accused and judged. (19:7)
- He was misunderstood and endured loneliness. (19:8, 9)
- He gave up His rights. (19:11)
- He suffered emotional abuse. (19:12-15)
- He was manipulated by others. (19:21)
- He was used financially. (19:23)

In Matthew 13:44, we are told about a man who was willing to sacrifice everything to buy a hidden treasure. The extent of his sacrifice and the depth of his joy in embracing the sacrifice speaks of the worth he placed on the treasure. The treasure for those who lead others is the privilege of serving God's purposes by influencing people's lives for good, but the treasure cannot be found if the price is not paid.

In Mark 8:34, Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." By saying yes to Jesus to be a servant leader, we are saying yes to a life of rich rewards—and sometimes great sacrifice.

It is a privilege to sacrifice for Jesus. Following Jesus as a servant leader means you go wherever obedience requires, no matter the cost. But we experience great intimacy with Him as a reward for obedience.

In *Let the Nations Be Glad*, John Piper points out that Jesus' sacrifice for us does not mean we will escape our own sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, Christ's sacrifice on the cross empowers us to embrace our own sacrifices with grace and gratitude, knowing whatever we go through, He has gone through it before us. We take risks, endure abuse, give up rights, and even die for Christ—and those we serve.

I am reminded of the cry that went up from the Moravians of the eighteenth century, "The Lamb is worthy to receive the reward of His suffering!"

The price of leadership may mean leaving father and mother and houses and lands for His sake and the Gospel's. But realistically, for many of us it will entail simpler sacrifices, like living in the public eye, enduring the constant stress of caring for others, and pressure on our time.

Because Jesus died in your place, you are free—but not free to cling to earthly comforts for security. Rather, you are free to give up earthly comforts.

As leaders, we must not water down Jesus' invitation to suffer and sacrifice, nor should we interpret the call to live sacrificial lives in Western cultural terms (e.g., giving up coffee, a middle-class house, a new car, a hair dryer or curling iron, sports, etc.). A few cultural adjustments do not match what Jesus meant when He called us to take up our cross and follow Him. There is great peril in making our comfortable lives and the few things we occasionally give up the standard of sacrifice.

Jesus came into the world to sacrifice for the sake of others. Mark 8:31 says, "The Son of Man must suffer many things." Jesus made the price of leadership explicit when He said, "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:20)

The apostle Peter also addresses the theme of suffering. He makes it clear that the sacrificial lifestyle of Christ is a pattern to be followed by all of His disciples: "For to this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps." (1 Pet. 2:21)

Peter gets more specific when he addresses leaders: "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ...after you have suffered a while may the God of all grace...perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you." (1 Pet. 5)

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***Sally and I*** have paid the price of leadership for almost half a century. There have been hard times—even one or two times when we were near the point of giving up—but we would not trade any of the difficulties we have gone through for an easier life. For us, the rewards far outweigh the price.

Our leadership costs have included leading the way in sacrificial giving for a building fund, being separated from our families by thousands of miles, and living in a crime-

ridden inner city neighborhood. But the greatest price of all has been the ongoing demands on our time. Being constantly available to people can sometimes take a toll on Sally and me. But as I said, the rewards are far greater than the price.

These rewards have included building deep friendships in the countries we've served in. We have traveled the world, seen incredible beauty, learned about new cultures, and seen countless thousands of people come to faith in Christ. Our children have had the opportunity to travel abroad and they became world citizens in the process. We are deeply grateful for the life we have lived.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***Everyone is invited*** to lead by serving others, but not everyone is willing to pay the price. There is something inauthentic about a man or woman who is not willing to personally sacrifice to lead others, whether as a parent, business person, student, or pastor.

In *The Power of Vision*, Andy Stanley says:

It is hypocritical to ask others to take risks we are not willing to take ourselves. If God has birthed a vision in you, it is only a matter of time until you will come upon the precipice of sacrifice. What you do at that juncture will in all likelihood determine the future success or failure of your vision. It will certainly determine your capacity to garner the support of others.<sup>2</sup>

Are you prepared to pay the price? Take a moment to reflect on these questions and the following passage of Scripture to help you “count the cost:”

- Has your vision for making a difference in the lives of people captured your heart to the point that you are willing to make financial sacrifices for it? If not, pray into

it more. A vision that is from God comes with grace to live the vision. I call it “grace-empowered obedience.”

- Are you willing to pay the price to lead others? Do you know in your heart that God wants you to pay this price? The price tag for leadership is different for everyone. You probably know by now what the price tag is for you. It may be financial or travel far from home, but it could be other things as well. Whatever it is, you know what God is asking of you. It comes down to a matter of courage to obey what your heart is telling you must be done. Are you ready to say yes to that?
- Lastly, reflect on these words from Peter—Peter, who denied Jesus, but also the same Peter who went on to pay a great price to be obedient to what Jesus called him to do: “love my sheep.”

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have Him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we’ve been given a brand new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you’ll have it all—life healed and whole.

I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime. Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it proved pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out proved genuine. When Jesus wraps this all up, it’s your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of His victory. (1 Pet. 1:3–7, The Message)



## LESSON 38

# ***Succession***

---

*Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing near the cross. He said to His mother, "Woman, from now on, John is your son." Then He said to John, "Take care of her like your own mother."*

- John 19:25-27

*Jesus breathed out peace to His disciples. Then He commissioned them, "Just as the Father sent me, I am sending you and all those who pass on this message." Then He took a deep breath and breathed into them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," He said. "If you minister forgiveness in my name, I will be with you."*

- John 20:21-23

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***I have heard it said*** that success without a successor is actually a failure. Jesus left a legacy because He planned for succession. Jesus chose, mentored, and prepared His successors. He chose one of them to care for His mother and selected other disciples to become key leaders in continuing the work He had begun. Jesus was intentional about choosing and preparing those who followed after Him.

Succession happens best when insiders are appointed to take over. Members of a church community or employees of a business know the culture, and if they have been mentored well, they will have the skills and character to carry the vision and values into the future.

There are many examples of succession in the Bible: Moses handing off leadership to Joshua, Ruth to Naomi, David to Solomon, Elijah to Elisha, and Paul to Timothy. But we learn the most from the example of Jesus. The four Gospels



contain an in-depth record of Jesus' succession plan—written by those who succeeded Him.

From John 13-21, we can learn vital succession lessons from Jesus. Notice how He chose and prepared His disciples to take over.

## TWELVE SUCCESSION LESSONS FROM JESUS

1. HE TRUSTED – Jesus trusted His Father by trusting others to continue what He began.
2. HE PRAYED – Jesus prayed about who His key leaders were to be. He chose men and women the Father chose for Him.
3. HE SURRENDERED – Jesus surrendered in His heart to God the assignment God had given to Him. The succession plan will never work if the senior leader does not surrender control and trust God to sustain and grow the work He once led.
4. HE TRAINED – Jesus trained His leaders by orchestrating learning opportunities and personal encounters that shaped their character.
5. HE MENTORED – Jesus personally mentored His disciples, particularly His core team of Peter, James, and John.
6. HE LET GO – The men He had chosen and discipled were not ready when Jesus ascended into heaven. New leaders rarely are completely ready, but Jesus still let go of what He came to earth to accomplish. He knew He had done His part.
7. HE PROVIDED RESOURCES – Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to empower His disciples so they could carry on in His absence.
8. HE STAYED INVOLVED – To the degree the disciples wanted Jesus' help, He was available to them after He

turned things over to them.

9. HE LEFT TOWN – Jesus ascended into heaven and so gave His disciples time and space to apply the lessons He taught them. He told them they would do greater things and know Him more intimately after He was gone.
10. HE PROVIDED WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS – He made sure there were clear job descriptions in writing for future leaders. The Bible was Jesus’ way of ensuring there was clarity about how things should be done after He was gone.
11. HE ENCOURAGED – After He was out of the scene, Jesus went out of His way to send messages of encouragement to those He left behind.
12. HE NETWORKED ON BEHALF OF HIS SUCCESSORS – Jesus continued to connect His successors to others doing the same work.

## **LESSON LEARNED**

***I have personally*** been part of three senior-level successions, and I have observed many others. There are exceptions to every rule, but here are seven practical succession lessons I have learned by experience:

### **SEVEN SUCCESSION LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE**

1. Succession doesn’t work well if the previous leader hangs on to major responsibility or hangs around after the succession takes place. Leaders who stay around should do so only by invitation and be given a new job description to abide by.
2. Succession should happen with someone raised up on the inside, not someone from the outside.
3. Two-person senior leadership successions don’t work if both the senior leader and the second-in-command are

visionaries. For instance, suppose a succession plan includes simultaneously appointing a new CEO/COO team or a senior/associate pastor team. If both leaders have the capacity to take the enterprise forward, the team leadership approach should be temporary, for learning purposes only, with the foreknowledge that one person will step down or move on at an appointed time.

4. Visionary senior leaders in the church world will not bring forth other visionary leaders without moving aside or moving on to make room for them.
5. Succession plans must not be confused with replacement plans. Senior-level replacement is narrow in its focus on one leader, whereas succession has to do with creating a culture of leader development.
6. Succession needs a feeder system. This entails creating levels of leadership development opportunities, such as leading departments and projects in the corporate setting, small groups and outreach teams in the church, and mealtimes and household projects for families.
7. Ideally, there should be period of time without a senior leader, especially when a founding leader is handing over the reins. This gap time gives people an opportunity to grieve the loss of their senior leader and prepare to receive new leadership.

## **LESSON TO LIVE**

***Sadly,*** most senior leaders I have met are unprepared or unwilling to joyfully and intentionally hand off leadership to a successor. If this describes you, there may be some fundamental faults in your leadership. It could reveal both a lack of trust in God or expose a deficiency of discipleship.

Succession is discipleship. The heart of discipleship is intentional relationship. So, the questions to ask are:

- Are you preparing for succession and multiplication through personal discipleship? There is a time when it is right to hand off leadership. To hold on to leadership past that right time is a missed opportunity. Others will grow discouraged and resign, the work will stagnate, and momentum will be lost.
- Are you joyful about reproducing and cultivating your leadership skills in others? Do you look for opportunities to prepare them?
- What is your succession plan? If asked today to describe how and who you are quietly but deliberately preparing to take the leadership from you, would you be ready to answer?
- Are you ready to answer the “why” part of the equation? Why succession? Why is God pleased when we are deliberate about succession?
- Is there an open discussion about succession in your senior-level leadership? Or is it a “no-go” topic?



## LESSON 39

# ***Jesus-Style Church***

---

*"Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you." Then He took a deep breath and breathed into them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," He said. "If you forgive someone's sins, they're gone for good. If you don't forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?"*

- John 20:21-23 (The Message)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***I don't believe*** Jesus waited until He ascended to heaven to give birth to the church. He started the first church with His band of disciples.

In His first encounter with them after the resurrection, three things happened:

*He breathed out...*

*they breathed in...*

*and they opened their eyes.*

Jesus made it simple. He breathes out peace. We breathe in the Holy Spirit and the Word. We open our eyes to the world in need. Some people call this "simple church."

Simple is beautiful if it is focused on Jesus, God's Word, and the world. Small, simple church helps us focus on the important things: Breathe out. Breathe in. Open your eyes.

Simple church is uncomplicated, to the point, and easy for anyone to be part of, anywhere.

### **LESSON LEARNED**

***Sally and I*** have led very simple church communities most of our lives. We started a church for backpackers in Afghanistan—we met in our home until the group outgrew

our house. We also led a church on a houseboat in Amsterdam. Presently, we host a very small church in our home in Cape Town.

I have pastored a large church and enjoyed it immensely. But if I can choose, personally, I will go for the small, simple variety.

I like it because there's not a lot of work to do, no children's staff to train and motivate, no ushers and greeters to manage, no sound system to fuss with—just a few people who are on a journey to know Jesus, grow together, and reproduce our faith in others.

This way of church isn't a good fit for everyone. And to be honest, there are times Sally and I miss a big, corporate worship time with a thousand people singing robustly. And we do love hearing a stirring teaching from God's Word. But we also love church over a meal, with some friends, the kids included, doing life together—this is how we have come to enjoy church.

Many years ago, a friend asked me, "Floyd, what are the minimum biblical essentials needed to do church?" He was trying to provoke me to think through the vital ingredients of New Testament church that are transferable to any culture or context. The motive of his question was to ask how to do church in a way that is pleasing to God and encouraging to people's spiritual growth. Not that we only want what is minimal, but to get past the froth and fluff and fuss of church as we know it, to be able to pass on the essence of spiritual family—as Jesus intended.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***There are eight ingredients*** that naturally fall into the three dimensions of Jesus-style church, as seen in Jesus' encounter with the disciples in John 20.

## EIGHT JESUS-STYLE CHURCH INGREDIENTS

*Breathe out:*

1. WORSHIP – Give God thanks in a variety of ways.
2. PRAYER FOR CHURCH – Share needs and pray for each other.
3. ACCOUNTABILITY – Encourage transparency and obedience to God.
4. VISION – Stay on track with God's purposes.

*Breathe in:*

5. SCRIPTURE – Take in the Word of God (read, teach, discuss).
6. OBEDIENCE – Make an open commitment to obey God's Word.

*Open your eyes:*

7. PRAYER FOR OTHERS – Include neighbors, nations, and the lost.
8. SHARING – Proclaim the Good News, in both Word and deed.

A missionary to China once shared a dynamic truth with me. He said the church movements in China that were experiencing the greatest growth practiced all eight of the ingredients listed above. But when churches left out accountability, vision, obedience, and sharing the Good News with non-Christians, the churches stopped growing and turned inward. Much like churches in the West.

I'm sometimes asked to teach on the subject of healthy local church. I don't emphasize size—big or small. There are great churches of all sizes. Nor do I focus on the model of church. There are many different models of healthy churches in the world today. But I do stress these eight, non-negotiable values that, if practiced as a lifestyle, will give a church a dynamic quality that is irresistible.

Without being critical, consider whether your church practices these eight ingredients. If you identify areas for

improvement, what steps can be taken to put any lacking ingredients into practice?

Leading like Jesus is keeping the focus of church on the simple ingredients that He modeled for us. Don't wait for someone else to do this for you—take the initiative to start doing church at work, school, or in your home...today. If you take the responsibility, you will reap the rewards!





## LESSON 40

# ***Legacy***

---

*Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Do you love me?" Jesus said again to Simon Peter, "Do you really love me?" Jesus said still a third time, "Peter, do you love me? If so, lead my people with special care and compassion, for when you are old, you will also need others to carry you."*

- John 21:15-18 (paraphrase)

### **LESSON FROM JESUS**

***Jesus*** left an enduring legacy because He invested intentionally in His followers. He didn't rely on programs to disciple them, and He didn't delegate the assignment to others.

Discipleship was not a program to Jesus, it was about relationships. These relationships were His first ministry priority on earth because it was important for Him to leave a legacy—a gift, an inheritance, something of Himself—behind so others could build His church. There is no legacy without intentional discipling relationships.

In the verses above from John 21, we find Jesus restoring Peter in the same deliberate manner that Peter had denied Him. Peter denied Jesus three times—and three times, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him. He wasn't punishing Peter, and He wasn't rubbing failure in his face. He wasn't shaming him in front of the other disciples. He was restoring him in a careful, deliberate manner.

We all sin, and we all need someone to take the time and effort to restore us. Some sins are well-known to others, and some sins are only known to God. There is a difference between discipline, forgiveness, and restoration. Jesus had

already forgiven Peter. Peter didn't need church discipline because he had repented.

What he needed was someone to take the time to walk him through the restoration process. The time it takes to restore a person is dependent on the nature of their sin, and their attitude of repentance. The purpose of this encounter with Peter was to bring him back to his previous state of exuberant love and faith, but now with a deeper foundation of humility.

Leaving a legacy involves this kind of painstaking, deliberate love. It means walking with people (both leaders and disciples) through their failures and weaknesses, to the place of discipline (if that is what is required), then forgiveness and restoration.

There are three seasons in the life of a developing leader. And there is normally a crisis between each season that transitions a person from one season to the next, after they successfully pass through the crisis.

### THREE SEASONS OF LEADERSHIP

1. IDENTITY - During season one of life, the key question is often, "Who am I?" This season normally takes place in one's teens and 20s, but can extend far into life if one does not discover who they are in Christ at an early age.

As was said in the opening lesson of this book, the most important building block in a leader's character is identity. Everything a leader does is either because of a deep revelation of their identity, or because they're striving to find their identity.

2. CONTRIBUTION - Throughout season two, the principle question asked is, "What do I do with my life?" This season of life normally takes place in one's 30s and lasts through the late 60s or 70s. If a leader does not have a revelation of their identity in Christ, it will manifest in flesh patterns of manipulation, control, anger,

performance, and blame throughout the other seasons of their life. A leader who does not serve from a foundation of being loved will not love others.

3. LEGACY – When we reach season three, the question becomes, “What will I leave behind?” This is typically the season of the 70s and beyond. A season of legacy is the result of passing through the other two seasons of life successfully.

Your legacy can be built through various areas of contribution:

- Living a life of godliness and integrity that is passed on to others
- Bringing people to faith in Jesus
- Recruiting and training workers and leaders to advance the Kingdom of God here on earth
- Bringing about transformation in the marketplace of life that impacts people for God
- Discovering great truths from God’s Word and communicating them to others
- Being a peacemaker who promotes reconciliation and unity between peoples and nations
- Serving the poor and marginalized in a way that brings hope and fulfillment to people who don’t yet know God

Each season builds on the lessons learned in the previous season. If we have not discovered our identity in Christ, we will not know our ministry as God sees it, and if we don’t enter into the life’s work or calling that God has for us, we won’t leave behind a fruitful legacy.

Jesus told His disciples in John 15 that He wanted them to be fruitful. He desires for each of us to bear “much fruit.” For that to happen, we must pass through each of the three seasons God takes us through, with spiritual fathers and

mothers who disciple us, and a spiritual family (local church) to journey with us. We need mentors who have gone before us, peers who walk beside us, and disciples who come behind us.

## LESSON LEARNED

***I am the fruit*** of other people's lives. I have been disciplined by fathers and mothers in the Lord. If I leave a lasting legacy, it can be attributed to those men and women.

One of the greatest of compliments I could hear is learning that I am someone's spiritual grandfather. Recently, here in the tiny village of Kommetjie (a suburb of Cape Town), I met a young lady who told me, "You disciplined Jim in Amsterdam, Holland, and Jim disciplined me. I claim you as my spiritual grandfather in the Lord!"

Spiritual children are one of the fruits of a lasting legacy.

## LESSON TO LIVE

***A legacy*** is the ultimate testimony of a life well-lived for Jesus. It is the result of a focused life. Legacy is the long-term result of a long journey of obedience in the same direction.

Every leader leaves behind fruit from their lives, some good and some bad. Many leaders, I would even say most leaders, do not live intentionally enough to leave behind a God-glorifying legacy.

The choice is yours to make. To live in such a way that leaves a legacy that pleases the Father—or not. Like Peter, you will most likely deny Jesus at some point in your journey. The question is not whether will you fail Him. The question is, will you welcome the Lord Jesus to ask you the same questions He asked Peter:

*"Do you love me?"*

*“Do you love me more than all these?”*

*“Do you really love me?”*

Many years ago, I made a covenant with the Lord. It was a covenant regarding my legacy. I entered into this covenant by asking Him to do and change anything and everything He needed to in me so that the fruit of my life would last into eternity.

I have never regretted making that covenant as a young 27-year-old. It helped me find my identity in Christ, and from there—after many years of service to Him—move into the legacy season of my life.

It is by receiving God’s grace that I will leave a lasting legacy. I pray the same for you.

# NOTES

## WHY JESUS?

1. [Timothy Keller, \*Encounters with Jesus\* \(New York: Dutton, The Penguin Group, 2013\).](#)
2. [James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, \*The Leadership Challenge\* \(San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008\).](#)
3. [Keller, \*Encounters with Jesus\*.](#)

## LESSON 3

1. [Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard, \*The Leadership Lessons of Jesus\* \(Nashville: B&H Books, 2008\).](#)
2. [Robert Coleman, \*The Master Plan of Evangelism\* \(Ada: Revell, 2010\).](#)

## LESSON 5

1. [Briner and Pritchard, \*The Leadership Lessons of Jesus\*.](#)

## LESSON 8

1. [John C. Maxwell, \*The Maxwell Leadership Bible\* \(Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007\).](#)

## LESSON 9

1. [Warren Bennis, \*Why Leaders Can't Lead\* \(San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997\).](#)

## LESSON 15

1. [Robert Clinton, \*The Making of a Leader\* \(Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2013\).](#)

## LESSON 19

1. [Robert Coleman, \*The Master Plan of Evangelism\* \(Ada: Revell, 1994\).](#)

## LESSON 21

1. [Briner and Pritchard, \*The Leadership Lessons of Jesus\*.](#)

## LESSON 26

1. [Briner and Pritchard, \*The Leadership Lessons of Jesus\*.](#)

## LESSON 27

1. [Our story is told in my book, \*Living on the Devil's Doorstep\* \(Edmonds: YWAM Publications, 1999\).](#)

## LESSON 29

1. [Peter Scazzero, \*The Emotionally Healthy Church\* \(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010\).](#)
2. [Ibid.](#)

## **LESSON 30**

1. [Bob Sorge, \*Loyalty\* \(Lee's Summit: Oasis House, 2004\).](#)
2. [Ibid.](#)

## **LESSON 31**

1. [Warren Bennis, \*On Becoming a Leader\* \(New York: Basic Books, 2009\).](#)
2. [Ibid.](#)

## **LESSON 32**

1. [Keller, \*Encounters with Jesus\*.](#)
2. [Ibid.](#)

## **LESSON 33**

1. [Jimmy Seibert, \*Passion and Purpose\* \(Brentwood: Clear Day Publishers, 2014\).](#)

## **LESSON 34**

1. [Tate Taylor, \*The Help\*, film, directed by Tate Taylor, \(2011; Beverly Hills: Walt Disney Studios\). Based on the novel by Kathryn Stockett.](#)

## **LESSON 35**

1. [Andy Stanley, \*The Power of Vision\* \(Cape Town: Struik Christian Books, 2007\).](#)

## **LESSON 37**

1. [John Piper, \*Let the Nations Be Glad\* \(Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010\).](#)
2. [Stanley, \*The Power of Vision\*.](#)